

KEEPING ALIVE THE SYMBOL

A Case Study of the Israeli and Palestinian Women of the
Jerusalem Link

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Development Studies
Master's Thesis
May 2008

Tiedekunta-Fakultet-Faculty Faculty of Social Sciences		Laitos-Institution-Department Institute of Development Studies
Tekijä-Författare-Author Kumpulainen, Heidi		
Työn nimi-Arbetets titel-Title Keeping Alive the Symbol: A Case Study of the Israeli and Palestinian Women of the Jerusalem Link		
Oppiaine - Läroämne - Subject Development Studies		
Työn laji-Arbetets art-Level Master's thesis	Aika-Datum-Month and year 2008-05-12	Sivumäärä-Sidantal- Number of pages 117 + 10
<p>Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract</p> <p>The purpose of the study is to examine transnational women's activism in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), crossing traditional enemy lines, and the experiences different women have gained from this joint work. The topic is approached via a case study of the Jerusalem Link, composed of the Palestinian organization Jerusalem Center for Women and the Israeli organization Bat Shalom. The activism of the Link is based on the joint political principles which the women constantly revise through their political dialogue. Furthermore, the Jerusalem Link advocates very strongly for the inclusion of women in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.</p> <p>The research is based on a yearlong fieldwork in Israel and OPT in 2004-2005, its central source being 24 semi-structured interviews with Israeli and Palestinian women activists. The interviewing material was further complemented by participant observation and archival research.</p> <p>The focus of the research is twofold: firstly analysing the institutional ground for women's activism, and secondly, the experiences of women active in the Link. Therefore, the nature of women's organizations in conflict zones and women's specific experiences during times of war have formed the theoretical angles through which the activism of the Link has been analysed. These gender-specific experiences of war largely determine the forms women's activism takes both during and after conflict.</p> <p>Special emphasis in the examination of the women's activism has been placed on the aspects of feminism, activism, and nationalism, and the interaction between these three themes in the work of the Jerusalem Link. Among the women studied, there were Israeli Jewish, Israeli Palestinian, and Palestinian women, and the study highlights the multiplicity of differences and divisions between them with regard to power, ethnicity, and class.</p> <p>The research furthermore underlines the centrality of the Israeli occupation and the power structures it creates between women for the practical work of the Link. While ending the occupation is the main objective of the Link, the occupation also creates boundaries between women, affecting the ways in which women view and experience the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.</p>		
Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Keywords Israel Palestine activism - women - peace dialogue		
Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited		
Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information		

Tiedekunta-Fakultet-Faculty Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta		Laitos-Institution-Department Kehitysmatutkimuksen laitos
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<p>Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract</p> <p>Tutkimus aiheena on naisten transnationaali aktivismi Israelissa ja miehityillä palestiinalaisalueilla, sekä naisten kokemukset tästä perinteiset vihollisajat ylittävästä yhteistyöstä. Tutkimuksessa keskittyy tarkastelemaan kahden naisjärjestön, israelilaisen Bat Shalomin ja palestiinalaisen Jerusalem Center for Women -järjestön toimintaa. Järjestöt työskentelevät yhdessä Jerusalem Link -viitekehyksen puitteissa ja toiminnassaan jatkuvasti kehittävät yhteisiä poliittisia periaatteitaan dialogin kautta. Lisäksi naisjärjestöt toimivat voimaakkaasti sen puolesta, että naisten ääni saataisiin kuuluviin myös virallisissa rauhanneuvotteluissa.</p> <p>Tutkimus pohjaa vuoden mittaiselle kenttätöjaksolle Israelissa ja palestiinalaisalueilla vuosina 2004-2005, ja sen keskeinen materiaali koostuu 24 naisaktivistin haastatteluista. Haastattelumateriaalia on täydennetty arkistotutkimuksen ja osallistuvan havainnoinnin kautta.</p> <p>Tässä tutkimuksessa naisten aktivismia lähestytään sekä sen institutionaalisen perustan että naisjärjestöjen jäsenten kokemusten kautta. Siten konfliktialueilla toimivien naisjärjestöjen erityispiirteet sekä naisten erityiset kokemukset sodan aikana ovat muodostaneet tutkielman teoreettisen perustan. Naisten kokemukset konfliktin aikana vaikuttavat merkittävästi siihen, millaista työtä naisjärjestöt tekevät sekä sodan aikana että konfliktin jälkitilanteessa.</p> <p>Naisjärjestöjen toimintaa tutkittaessa huomiota on kiinnitetty erityisesti feminismiin, nationalismiin, ja aktivismin vuoropuheluun Jerusalem Linkin työssä. Tutkimukseen osallistuneiden naisten joukossa oli Israelin juutalaisia, Israelin palestiinalaisia sekä palestiinalaisia naisia, ja tutkimus valottaakin niitä monimutkaisia rajoja ja eroavaisuuksia, jotka naisten välille muodostuvat esimerkiksi valtaerojen, etnisyyden ja luokkaerojen kautta.</p> <p>Erityisesti tutkimus korostaa Israelin miehityksen vaikutusta Jerusalem Linkin työlle. Miehityksen lopettaminen on paitsi naisjärjestöjen yhteinen päämäärä, myös se keskeinen tekijä, joka luo eroja naisten välille, vaikuttaen siihen, miten naiset näkevät konfliktin luonteen, ja millaisia heidän kokemuksensa konfliktista ovat.</p>		
Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Keywords Israel Palestiina aktivismi - naiset - rauha dialogi		
Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited		
Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information		

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BS	Bat Shalom
BSA	Bat Shalom Archives
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GoI	Government of Israel
IGO	International governmental organization
IPCRI	Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information
IWC	International Women's Commission
JCW	Jerusalem Center for Women
n.d.	not dated
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
P/CRO	Peace and conflict resolution organization
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNG	the Personal Narratives Group
PNGO	Palestinian NGO Network
SMO	Social Movement Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WP/CRO	Women's Peace and Conflict Resolution Organization

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims of the Research

In June 2008, the Israeli occupation of West Bank and Gaza will reach its 41st year. The year 2008 also commemorates the 60th anniversary of the births of the Israeli state and the Palestinian refugee problem respectively. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been described as one of the most protracted conflicts in the world where no simple and straightforward resolution is at sight. While protracted social conflicts always entail enormous amounts of human suffering, violence, and enmity, they also give rise to movements and groups aiming to end the violence, protect human rights, and seek connection to the opposite side of the conflict. For members of the international community and some locals alike, these groups often come to represent the symbol of hope, encompassing the potential for a better future. In these respects, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is no exception.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the nature of women's activism in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)¹, crossing traditional enemy lines amidst violent conflict, and the experiences different women have gained from the joint work. I will approach the topic through a case study of the Jerusalem Link, an umbrella for joint work of a Palestinian women's NGO and an Israeli women's NGO. Studying women from opposite sides of a conflict and their joint activism involves several pitfalls, especially when the conflict in question is characterized by huge asymmetries of power, as is the case in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What R. Ray and A. C. Korteweg (1999) have called the "dilemma of particularism versus universalism," present in much of the research on the organizing of the women of third world, is also relevant when examining women's activism in Israel and Palestine. Simona Sharoni has argued that many feminist scholars and journalists have interpreted the joint activities from a rather universalistic point of view, and

...tended to treat these coalition-building attempts uncritically, presenting them as a proof that if Palestinian and Israeli women are able to build alliances transcending national boundaries, sisterhood is indeed global. (Sharoni 1995, 9)

At the other end of the spectrum, witnessing the reality on the ground can lead to a very particularistic approach to women's activism. Researcher Sherna Berger Gluck, origi-

¹ Term generally used by the UN for the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, occupied by Israel in 1967.

nally wanting to examine activism against the occupation by both Israeli and Palestinian women, relinquished the idea out of "heightened political sensitivities". She concluded:

...experiencing the daily reality of Palestinian lives under occupation I came to understand more profoundly the 'trap of asymmetry'. The meaning of fighting Israeli Occupation is not the same for Palestinian and Israeli women, and attempts at symmetry merely blur the distinction between occupied and occupier and deflect attention from the basic injustice experienced by the Palestinian people. (Berger-Gluck 1991, 207)

I have, however, in my research adhered to a pattern of analysis in between universalism and particularism, and placed the asymmetries of power between Israeli and Palestinian women at the very heart of my research, consciously focusing on how these differences manifest themselves in the cooperation of the Link. Rather than assuming that studying joint activism would "blur the distinction," I argue that it is exactly in the kinds of joint efforts as the Jerusalem Link where the many dimensions of the existing power imbalance and the multiple differences between women can very clearly be revealed, precisely because the work involves both Israeli and Palestinian women. I have therefore incorporated in my analysis both the downsides and the potential of women's cooperation, constantly bearing in mind the specific challenges and circumstances the Palestinian and Israeli members of the Link have to encounter. (Ray & Korteweg 1999, 48; Sharoni 1995, 4-5, 9)

The aim of the research has furthermore been twofold: firstly to study the institutional ground for women's activism, and secondly, the experiences of women active in the two organizations of the Link. Through this approach, it is hoped, a vivid description of the day-to-day activism of the Link and its organizations will be produced. Special emphasis has been placed on the aspects of feminism, activism, and nationalisms in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: these three themes and their interaction in the work of the Jerusalem Link constitute the thread running through my research. More exactly, the thesis aims at answering the following questions:

1. What kind of forms has the women's activism taken?
2. What have been the special motivations, challenges and obstacles to joint work?
3. How do the women themselves value their activism and see its contribution?
4. How do the power asymmetries of the conflict manifest themselves in the joint work of the Link?

The first task concerning the Jerusalem Link and its activism has therefore been a descriptive one: the nature of the two organizations constituting the Jerusalem Link, namely Bat Shalom and the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW), and the types of work done and tactics used by them, both jointly and separately. Another point of reference to the question of organizational activism has been the personal perspective of the women involved: how these women have experienced the work of the Link, and how they themselves would define, value, and describe their activism.

The Jerusalem Link by nature is an initiative by women, and the two organizations comprising it are women's organizations. The perspective of feminism has thus provided a fruitful angle to the work of the Link and to the activism of its members. Although Bat Shalom and JCW on an organizational level define themselves as feminist, it has been equally important to investigate *what kind* of feminists - if feminists at all - the members of the Link would consider themselves to be. Based on the writings of Third World Feminists, the focus has also been on examining how the inequalities between women become manifested in joint activism in a situation of an on-going conflict. Lastly, it has also been examined how feminism has been employed as a strategy by the Link, and how the women of the Link have seen the role of women and "women-only" organizations in conflict resolution.

Finally, the challenges, obstacles and motivations to work crossing national and ethnic boundaries, joining women from both sides of the conflict, come in many forms. The Jerusalem Link has been one of the few channels of dialogue that has brought together representatives from the three biggest communities in Israel and the OPT: the Israeli Jewish, the Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the Palestinians of OPT. Therefore, it has been important to address the question of how these boundaries, nationalism(s), would reveal themselves in the work of the Jerusalem Link, and how the women would position themselves in relation to their communities, to nationalism, and to the conflict.

In the following chapters the twofold pattern of studying women's peace organizations both as organizations and from the perspective of the experiences of their women members, is put into practice in the case of the Jerusalem Link. While this chapter introduces the research methodology and provides insights to women's peace activism as a research topic, in chapter two the theoretical framework for examining women's peace organizations will be derived from the existing literature on women and war, feminist organizations, and women's organizations in conflict zones. Chapter three presents the institutional basis of the Jerusalem Link, and the central organizational fea-

tures of both Bat Shalom and JCW. This institutional examination lays the foundation for further investigating the experiences of women from the joint work in terms of nationalism, feminism, and activism. Chapter four focuses on the experiences of women based on their nationalities, while chapter five illustrates how the differences between women manifest themselves in the practice of negotiating political principles for the Link. While the aspects of women and gender are present also in the previous chapters, chapter six focuses especially on the nature of the activism of the Link in terms of feminism and also activism for peace. Finally, in the concluding chapter I will draw together the central findings of this research, and elaborate on their meaning to the understanding of women's joint activism in conflict zones.

1.2 Methodology and Sources

1.2.1 Doing Fieldwork in a Situation of Military Occupation

The material for this thesis was gathered during a yearlong fieldwork in Israel and OPT between October 2004 and October 2005. (See Attachment 1) During this time several important events shaping the socio-political reality in the region took place. In November 2004 the long-term president of the Palestinians, Yasser Arafat, passed away, and in the following January 2005 elections, Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah party was elected as President. In February 2005 at a summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, both President Abbas and the then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon declared an end to violence. Finally, in August 2005 Sharon carried out his unilateral disengagement plan and evacuated the Israeli settlements in Gaza and parts of the Northern West Bank. All these events affected in some manner the work and activities of the two women's organizations I was researching.

Through my fieldwork I got to know two very different worlds. Israel and OPT, geographically so close to each other, sometimes seemed worlds apart. The situation of military occupation affects both societies, but in very different ways. Travelling in the West Bank, one could not avoid continuously facing the presence of Israeli soldiers, checkpoints, the illegal Israeli settlements and the fence/wall, all manifestations of the Israeli military occupation, which then had lasted close to forty years. Yet n less than half an hour one could pass to the shopping streets and cafeterias of West Jerusalem. However, also there the presence of weapons, khaki, and security checks were a "normal" everyday phenomenon. Doing fieldwork in this context posed challenges both to the researcher and the research. Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius C. G. M. Robben (1995) have spoken of an "existential shock" faced by field workers in violent situations.

As a researcher continuously facing the contrasts between the two worlds, and witnessing the on-going human rights violations, I too was devastated and angered by what I saw. The below note was written in November 2004 after my first visit to the Israeli governed part of the city of Hebron² where the every-day lives of an estimated 35 000 Palestinians are being severely restricted by the presence of some 500 extremely ideological Israeli settlers:

Never in my life will I forget what I saw today. The evilness, the presence of evil that penetrated through all the little details I saw. WELCOME TO HELL, welcome to Hebron. I will never forget what I saw, there is no justification for it, no excuse. Usually the sentences begin: "The occupation is bad, but one has to remember also..." Now there are no buts. There is just a full stop...I'm ashamed of "my effort to be neutral". When one sees something like this, there exists no excuse and one cannot refuse taking sides. (Field Notes, 27/11/2004)

However, Nordstrom and Robben assert that the existential shock not only follows traumatic experiences encountered in the field; it equally follows experiencing the creativity and hope connected to the sites of violence. (Nordstrom and Robben 1995, 13-14) Likewise, time after time I was amazed by the courage of people defying the occupation by simply continuing their day-to-day lives or, like the subjects of my research, by actively working towards ending the occupation. These two experiences, the trauma of witnessing the occupation in action and the courage shown by people on both sides of the Green Line, and the tension between these two extremes, were ever present during my fieldwork, making it also an emotionally challenging task.

Several ethical dilemmas have been connected to conducting research in zones of conflict. Most of the considerations focus around questions of safety of both the researcher and the researched, and accountability. (See for example Goodhand 2000; Jacoby 2006, 157) While my fieldwork did introduce me to new experiences such as my first breath of tear gas, harassment when passing a military check point, and confronting fully armed soldiers during a demonstration, I never felt personally threatened or was harmed. When it comes to the safety of my interviewees, the interviews were always conducted on prior consent, and always in a location suggested or approved by the interviewees. In most cases this meant meeting the women at their workplaces or the offices of Bat Shalom and JCW, but in a few cases also at their homes or in a cafeteria. A copy of this thesis will also be delivered to both Bat Shalom and JCW offices.

² According to Hebron Protocol from 1997 the city of Hebron has been divided into two parts: Israeli governed H-2 which comprises 20 percent of Hebron and Palestinian H-1 which comprises 80 percent of Hebron respectively. The H-2 area includes the old city, the Ibrahimi mosque/Cave of Makpelah, and the Israeli settlements where an estimated 500 settlers live.

Conflict zone researchers have different approaches to the centrality of violence and war to their research. Carolyn Nordstrom, for example, has called her field techniques the "ethnography of a warzone", where "the theme of war, rather than a specific locality, situates the study." (Nordstrom 1995, 139) On the other hand, Jonathan Goodhand has emphasized the need for researchers in conflict zones to take into account the danger of "conflict fetish", namely violence and war becoming the only lenses through which peoples lives may be observed. Goodhand maintains: "[t]hose affected by conflict frequently remind researchers and aid workers that there are other aspects to their lives, that war is not the only point of reference". (Goodhand 2000, 15)

For my specific research topic, women's activism for peace, the situation of military occupation is, of course, central. The Jerusalem Link exists because of the occupation, and the occupation provides the context for the Link's actions. However, to call my field work the "ethnography of a warzone" would be a great exaggeration, and misrepresent the focus of my research. First of all, my fieldwork took place in a period of relative calm, and the focus of the research has not been so much on the conflict as on the women's experiences of trying to end the violence. Secondly, an on-going and already in many ways established military occupation differs greatly as a research site from a situation of open violent conflict. Although there have been major escalations during the past 40 years of occupation, violence has also become to be expressed in more systemic and established forms: restrictions of movements, walls, and settlements. Violence has, in a way, been internalized and the manifestations of occupation have become parts of every day life.

While conducting my research, I simultaneously studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, worked as a volunteer for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel in the West Bank city of Hebron, and lived both in West and East Jerusalem, inside Israel and OPT. Whilst going through security check-ups and taking Israeli busses, passing through checkpoints and escorting Palestinian children near Israeli settlements, I gained in-depth personal knowledge on the meaning of the military occupation for both the Israeli and Palestinian communities. Even with all these experiences, I was still fully aware of being an outsider: the fight that the subjects of my research were fighting, whether it be against the occupation or for peace, was *not my* fight but theirs. This awareness greatly affected my approach during fieldwork to mostly abstain from personal reclamations concerning the conflict: at the end of the day, I did not permanently live in the area, and in case of violent clashes, my life would never be the first one at stake. Therefore, as a foreigner, I felt I had no right to judge the

solutions people had made or the positions they had taken regarding the conflict, for I had not lived through the same situations they had. Instead I tried my very best to respect the multiple truths revealed to me during the interviews and through participant observation, regardless of whether they resonated with my own views.

1.2.2 Focused Interviews and the Experiences of Women

The driving force behind much feminist research has been making the previously invisible women and their experiences known and visible by "giving voice" to them. As Simona Sharoni has maintained, the experiences and contributions of Israeli and Palestinian women have largely been forgotten by both politicians negotiating peace and conventional scholarship on the Middle East. Therefore, in focusing on women's political activism for peace, this research as such adheres to the feminist research tradition. Consequently, the main method used has been semi-structured focused interviewing, because interviewing, quoting the words of Shulamit Reinharz, "offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher". Furthermore, Reinharz has argued that this aspect of interviewing has been especially important when studying women whose voices have been suppressed for so long. (Byrne & Lentin 2000, 7; Jacoby 2006, 161; Reinharz 1992, 19; Sharoni 1995, 9)

The core material of this thesis consists of 24 focused interviews with the board members and directors of both Bat Shalom and JCW. The interviews were done in two stages: first with the directors and then with the board members. The directors of the organizations were asked questions regarding their organizations, and, in addition, were asked to name board members for interviewing (See Attachment 2). In choosing the interviewees, therefore, a partial snowball method was used. The interview of the director of JCW was later complemented with an additional interview of the then acting director of JCW. The lists of interviewees given by the directors were later screened, and further complemented or discarded. A comprehensive list of all the women interviewed, with descriptions, has been attached to this research and in addition to the directors, includes 21 Bat Shalom and JCW members. (Attachement 3)

The outlines for the semi-structured interviews were developed only after arriving in the field. Especially the second-stage interviewing questions were designed to be open-ended, and cover broadly the three themes central to my research: political peace activism, nationalism, and feminism. (See Attachment 4). I decided to conduct the interviews individually in order to give each interviewee the same possibilities and room to express her personal views. It was also assumed that individual interviewing

would enable women to talk about their personal experiences and opinions, and facilitate the expression of possible critical thoughts on cooperation. During the interviews, I consciously avoided expressing my personal views, in order not to influence what kinds of experiences and opinions the interviewees felt comfortable expressing. All the interviews apart from one were conducted in English, and all of the interviews were recorded and transcribed in detail. One of the interviews was conducted partly in English and partly in Hebrew, with the help of an interpreter. I was however able to follow the Hebrew discussion to some extent as I speak the language on an intermediate level. Later on, the Hebrew parts of the interview were screened and re-transcribed by an additional translator to ensure the validity of interpretation.

As the board members of both organizations are, in addition to the directors, the primary persons engaged in the actual process of political dialogue between the organizations, the natural choice was to focus the second stage interviews on the 2004 boards of the organizations. At the same time, it was important that the interviewees were representative of the sociological composition of their organizations and their boards in terms of their age, ethnicity and religion. Therefore, an effort was made to include young and older, Israeli Jewish, Israeli Palestinian and Palestinian, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi³, Muslim, Jewish and Christian women among the interviewees. In addition to the 2004 board members and directors, the interviewees on the side of Bat Shalom also included three prior board members who were still very active in Bat Shalom.

Despite the previously declared noble aim of "giving voice" to the women researched, in the case of this research I, for the large part, found the women neither invisible nor having difficulties to "giving voice" to their opinions themselves. These women of the Link seemed very accustomed to giving interviews also, and maybe even foremost, to international women whether they be journalists or researchers. As an interviewee expressed it: "You know I was but beginning to think how many MAs and PhDs have I actually done without doing them..." (I1) With some of the interviewees this resulted in what could be called "interviewing fatigue" which materialized, for example, as difficulties of getting in contact with the women, unreturned calls, delayed interviews, and resistance during the interviews in the form of answering questions only very briefly and on a very general level. Having finished the interviews, after spending months pending on phone lines, I felt like having run a marathon, while transcribing the interviews and analysing them was yet a task ahead of me.

³ In broad terms the Ashkenazim are Jewish with mainly European origin, whereas the Mizrahim have their roots in Arab and Muslim countries. (Dahan-Kalev 2001, 669)

Doing research on the experience of women in a zone of conflict, especially in the case of highly polarized conflicts, can prove to be somewhat problematic. Tami Jacoby, interviewing women on their experiences of insecurity, noticed the high level of politicization of women activists within Israel. According to her, the activists have "a political agenda that they want to present to the world in order to influence public opinion and ultimately the political system." She has further argued that this factor directly influences the fieldwork encounters, where experience may be presented in a way to further one's political goals. Thus a woman may perceive herself differently from what she relates to the interviewer - and also the interviewer might not understand the interviewee's words in the intended way. Therefore, drawing a direct line between expressed experience and knowledge is, according to Jacoby, methodologically problematic. To highlight these complexities, and the fact that women themselves are active agents in negotiating the ways they want to be perceived and understood, Jacoby has employed the term *self-presentation* as a term more suitable than experience. In the end, Jacoby affirms that experience "should be understood, not as truth, but simply as telling one's story...that represents the choices and priorities of the particular individual or group". (Jacoby 2006, 154-155, 161-162)

However, in line with a slightly different approach towards women's narratives by researcher Ronit Lentin (2000a; 2000b) and the Personal Narratives Group (PNG 1989), among others, I claim that what has been traditionally considered as empirical "truth" can also be called into question. According to PNG:

[w]hen speaking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they *are* revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past "as it actually was", aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences. (PNG 1989, 261)

As Ronit Lentin has claimed, peoples' stories "are not empirical findings in the positivist sense, nor are they open to corroboration or 'proof'". Instead women's narratives reveal "the plural truths of experience" and might in the end prove to be "as true as our lives" with their complex power-networks, shifting contexts, inconsistencies and even with their political ambitions. (Lentin 2000a, 259-260; 2000b, 16) Therefore, I do not simply understand the narratives of the women interviewed as stories with self-representation, but have approached them as glimpses of truth to the lives and activism of *some* women in Israel and Palestine. In contrast to Jacoby, I also expected the women I interviewed to be political and express their experiences and opinions in political terms, as I interviewed them precisely because they were political peace activists. I would furthermore

suggest that there exists a certain continuum between the experiences and political activism of a person, as experiences on the one hand can be translated into political action and uttered in political terms, but on the other hand, political activism also naturally creates new experiences.

When writing my thesis I have purposefully used a lot of quotes from the research interviews. As I have been quoting the interviews, I have omitted repeated words and expletives, and corrected basic spelling mistakes in order to increase the readability of the quotations. If words have been added, they appear in square brackets. Omissions of several words or pauses in speech have been indicated by using an ellipsis. The interpreter of the English-Hebrew interview originally translated parts of the interview in third person; as I have been quoting this interview, I have changed the text into first person format to make it uniform with the other interviews. As it became evident that during the interviews some of the interviewees did in fact share very personal stories and opinions with me, I decided to code the interviews in order to protect the integrity and privacy of my interviewees. The interviews are thus being quoted anonymously, despite the fact that many interviewees would not have minded being quoted by name. In the quotations, "I" signifies an Israeli or an Israeli Palestinian interviewee, and "P" a Palestinian interviewee, the numbers of the codes being in a random order. The only exception is the then Minister for Women's Affairs Zahira Kamal who especially requested to be quoted using her name.

1.2.3 Participant Observation

This research has benefited from the usage of triangulation in collecting and analysing the research material. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, two other complementary research methods were used to gather material: archival research and participant observation. According to Kathleen M. and Billie R. DeWalt, using participant observation as a method has three main advantages. Firstly, using participant observation increases the quality of fieldwork data, secondly, it also increases the quality of data analysis, and thirdly, it can give rise to new research questions or hypotheses based on information gathered through observation. Participant observation can thus be used as a method for gathering fieldwork material, as a tool for analysis and as a way to constantly monitor the direction and advancement of the research. (DeWalt & DeWalt 2002, 8, 13) In my research participant observation was used for all these three purposes.

During my fieldwork period, I aimed to take part in the activities of both Bat Shalom and JCW. I did in fact manage to attend a multitude of Bat Shalom's activities: these activities were advertised on the email list of Bat Shalom, and they were open for

everybody to attend. A similar effort was made to participate in the events and projects organized by JCW, but this never materialized despite the fact that I was told there would be no problems in attending. First of all, information about the events was hard to acquire, as for example the events were not advertised via the JCW email list. Secondly, in order to attend, I would have needed to arrange it beforehand with the personnel of JCW, which despite repeated efforts never occurred. In addition, the few joint meetings that the Jerusalem Link had during my fieldwork period were not open for observation, and therefore my research does not include any data gathered from the actual dialogue. On the whole, my participant observation material is thus composed mostly of data gathered from the meetings of Bat Shalom, which may have caused a slight imbalance at the analysing stage of my research, as I had more in-depth material available on Bat Shalom.

Participant observation as a method brings together the processes of participation and observation, which in turn can be combined in varying degrees. My role as a participant observer could be best described as what DeWalt and DeWalt define as active participation⁴: a situation where the researcher "engages in almost everything that other people are doing as means of trying to learn the cultural rules for behaviour", and also takes some of the roles of actual members. (DeWalt & DeWalt 2002, 19-22) As an active participant I joined in the activities of Bat Shalom, whether they were political tours within Israel or political discussions at the office, and I also took part in the annual meeting of Bat Shalom. Two bigger annual events of Bat Shalom that I also participated in were the Land Day Event in Nazareth in April 2005, and *Sukkat Shalom* in October 2005. Majority of the events of Bat Shalom took place in Hebrew, but most of the times there was a Bat Shalom member interpreting the discussion into English for me. During these meetings I took notes mainly on what was being said around me, and also photographed the events.

In addition to the activities of Bat Shalom, I took part in three bigger seminars with themes connected to my research topic. The first conference was organized by the Birzeit University in February 2005 in Ramallah on the *Future of the Palestinian Political System*, while the second one, held in Jerusalem, dealt with assessing and evaluating Israeli-Palestinian people-to-people activities, and was initiated by the Canadian, Norwegian, and EC delegations. Last but not least, I attended the week-long Women in Black (WIB) International Conference, themed *Women Resist War and Occupation*, in

⁴ DeWalt & DeWalt modify categories developed by Spradley (1980) to include only the aspect of participation, and have decided to exclude the emotional involvedness.

August 2005 in Jerusalem. Both Bat Shalom and JCW were among the organizers of the conference.

In the case of my research, information gained by participating in the events of Bat Shalom firstly provided me a way to elaborate on the interviewing questions, as I purposefully only drafted the outline of the second stage interviews after some time had passed in the field. Secondly, I could constantly evaluate the issues coming up during the interviews against my findings through participant observation. Most importantly, through participant observation I felt I learned to understand the activism of the women I was studying on a more in-depth level. As DeWalt and DeWalt have suggested, the information gathered and remarks made through participant observation "facilitate the intuitive moments when a selection of notes about events, people and conversations comes together to provide us with a deeper insight and understanding of behavior." (DeWalt & DeWalt 2002, 13)

1.2.4 Archival Research

The archival material of this research has been collected from the Bat Shalom archives (BSA) situated at the Jerusalem office. The documents in the archives included organizational material such as minutes of the board meetings, older reports, letters, and emails. Especially in the early days of the Link the communication between the directors of Bat Shalom and JCW took place via letters and faxes. The focus of my attention has naturally been on the discussions and correspondence regarding the joint work. I gathered both English and Hebrew material, but my limited knowledge of Hebrew has obviously restricted using the material. I also requested to use the JCW archives, but because of restrictions on publicity, this was not permitted. Some material concerning JCW, such as older annual reports and letters from the director, could however be traced via the Bat Shalom archives. The Bat Shalom archival material has further been complemented by archival material in a modern form from the newly established Israeli Left Archive (ILA), which is an electronic internet database consisting of historical documents of the Israeli radical left. The collections include a small compilation of materials of Reshet⁵, the Israeli Women's Network for Peace. Reshet was the organization that preceded the establishment of Bat Shalom.

⁵ Reshet is an abbreviation from the Hebrew name רשת נשים לקבל שלום.

1.3 Women's Activism for Peace as a Research Topic

1.3.1 Researching "womenandpeace"⁶ in Israel and Palestine

As I was at the planning-stage of my research, I was under the impression that the topic of my research had been seldom researched. Arriving in the field, I soon discovered that the situation was vice versa, as everywhere around me I found academic research already done on the local women's peace movement, and researchers, mainly female, engaged in further research on the same topic. People were rarely surprised when I told them the topic of my thesis, on the contrary, as a teacher of the Hebrew University told me after I had introduced him the topic of my research: "You don't know how many people I've heard say that." Women's peace movement has thus clearly been one of the best-covered research topics in Israel and OPT in the recent years. The realization of the popularity of my topic led me to further self-examination: why is it that so many young, international academic women have such a profound interest in studying women's peace activism? This aspect of international attention, from activists and researchers alike, has added an additional layer to my examination of women's peace activism in the Middle East.

Many factors can probably explain the popularity of women's activism as a research topic. In 2000 the UN Security Council passed the resolution 1325 (UNSC 2000) on women, peace and security, highlighting the need to include women in conflict resolution and peacemaking. Reflecting the growth of women's peace activism, the resolution provided women in conflict zones with the much-needed international backing for their attempts to get their voice heard. Indeed, as Pankhurst and El-Bushra have noted, there has lately been an increasing international interest directed towards what Pankhurst calls "peaceful women". The work of women and the organizations and movements they have established has been documented both by academics and representatives of international organizations. Increasingly, also aid organizations have begun to highlight the role of women in their peace building agendas. This new attention could be, according to Pankhurst, explained "partly as a revulsion against the violence of war, and in the hope that a focus of attention on women might reveal the way towards a more peaceful, less violent world." (El-Bushra 2007, 131, 136; Pankhurst 2004, 20-21; UNSC 2000)

In addition to the increased interest by the international community and aid agencies, part of the explanation can probably also be found from personal motivations.

⁶ A term developed by Ruth Jacobson, and used by El-Bushra (2007, 142). The term highlights the tendency to couple women and peace uncritically.

According to Liz Stanley, in addition to utilitarian reasons, researchers engage in research because "it is socially and/or intellectually meaningful; it engages their intellectual, political and other interests; it challenges their existing skills or knowledge". While this is probably true for the bulk of researchers, Stanley further argues for an additional factor concerning feminist research: "that of a felt *necessity* to carry out particular research because the topic and/or the approach and the perceived resonance between these and the personal context of the researcher." The intellectual and personal aspects of the researcher's lives are interlinked, and for many feminist researchers women's peace groups have therefore provided an excellent case for combining their activism and ideals with their research interests. Somewhat similar remarks of "felt necessity" could also be made about research done in conflict zones, as involving oneself in this field can require the researcher, in the words of Ted Swedenburg, "to hop over corpses, with all the pain and privilege attendant on the outsider who inevitable survives the struggle and feels compelled to bear witness". (Stanley 1996, 46; Swedenburg 1995, 34)

Finally, some of the allure of "womenandpeace" might also have to do with the image of a "peace activist". The non-violent peace activist, stretching herself across the divide separating Israelis and Palestinians, is an easy and, at first glance, an unproblematic figure to identify with. As researcher Ted Swedenburg emphasises: "we may be embracing the stone thrower to deny or displace the troubling image of the guerrilla under arms, an image so readily associated with terrorism". (Swedenburg 1995, 36) The peace activists therefore become the "politically correct" research topics, another reflection of the keen interest of the international community at large to see any, even small steps towards peace in the area. However, while for many international activists and researchers women peace activists might come across as saints with haloes, in their own communities the same activists are perceived by some as traitors. I personally got to experience the sensitivity of my research topic during my first weeks in the field, as part of a discussion I had with a Finnish friend of mine, resident of Israel and married to an Israeli. Less than a month on the ground, I wrote:

I already managed to start my first fight on the peace movement...The attitude was "Who are you as a foreigner to come and say what is right in this country??? It would be good for you pro-Palestinians to go to the West Bank and see how things are handled there." In vain I tried to explain that I am pro-peace and neither pro-Palestine nor pro-Israel. That I'm on the side of both of them. Besides, how does defending peace make me solely pro-Palestinian? Does Israel not want peace? In any case it's weird to be here and listen to lectures on peace and conflict resolution because people's comments are expressed on such a personal level. And hear all the prejudices etc. as an opinion of an actual person and not just a line in a newspaper or a book. So often one hears how "Palestinians are being grown into hatred" or how "the Arabs don't want peace, Israel does". On the other hand one hears also other kinds of opinions, which is comforting. (Personal email 21/10/2004)

Simona Sharoni has argued that all research, and especially research done in conflict zones, constitutes a political act. (Sharoni 1999, 2) In choosing the topics of our research, we are not only guided by our own values but we also choose the angle through which we want to approach the realities on the ground. Therefore, in focusing my research on "womenandpeace" and furthermore on anti-occupation activists, I was without a doubt expressing my own values as a Western feminist woman, and an activist for human rights. I considered it important to examine the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a gender perspective, but furthermore, I wanted "to give voice" to a group of women who by their activism defied the hegemony of violence and war in the region, and searched for alternative approaches to resolving the conflict.

1.3.2 Previous Research

The issue of women and gender in the context of conflict, war and peace has increasingly attracted the attention of academic researchers. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the beginning of the first intifada in 1987, while marking a new period in the activism of both Israeli and Palestinian women against the occupation, also marked a change in the visibility of women's activism. Women's activism caught the eye of the international community and resulted in the influx of activists, academic scholars and journalists into the area "to witness the upsurge...and to express solidarity with and lend support to these struggles." The amount of studies documenting the activism of women thus rose, receiving mixed responses from "the research objects", the women themselves. Simona Sharoni has suggested that this can partly be explained by the fact that the research on women's activism has been primarily done *about* or *on* the women, instead of writing *for* the women or even *with* the women. (Sharoni 1995, 1-2, 4; Sharoni 1999, 1)

As Sharoni has further noted, the research on women and conflict on the whole has been "written primarily in English by academics who reside outside the conflict area they write about and write primarily for academic audiences." The body of research on Palestinian and Israeli women activists is by no means devoid of these problems. The predominance of international academics has, however, as a counter-reaction generated an extensive amount of studies and articles by Israeli and Palestinian women themselves. (Sharoni 1995, 2-3; 1999, 1-2) In the following, I will present the academic research most central to my thesis, focusing on research done on the joint activism between Israeli and Palestinian women in general and the Jerusalem Link in particular. I

will furthermore situate my research within the already existing body of research concerning women, conflict and peace in Israel and Palestine.

One of the most groundbreaking researches bringing together the women's movement in OPT and Israeli women's activism is the work *Gender and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (1995) by Simona Sharoni, an Israeli-American activist and researcher. The research, based on her dissertation, covers the years between the years 1987-1993 and traces the more organized linkages between Israeli and Palestinian women to the period of the first intifada, which acted as a catalyst for such connections. The research provides many insights to the development of women's resistance, alliance-making, and gender issues vis à vis the developments of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - insights which can be rendered valid also in the latter developments of the conflict. Thus, Sharoni's work has laid the foundations for many later researches on women's joint activism in Israel and Palestine.

Within the already popular research topic of "women and peace" in Israel and Palestine there still seem to be some research topics that are favoured by academics writing their dissertations and research. Two movements especially have been at the center of attention: the Women in Black movement and the topic of my research, the Jerusalem Link. In addition to my own thesis, at least six other academic theses have been written using the Jerusalem Link as a case study. All of these researches have been written by female researchers, two of them holding Israeli citizenship. Most of the academic theses are also fairly recent, written between the years 2000-2007, however, roughly half of them have been written prior to the beginning of the second intifada in 2000. In addition to academic dissertations, the Jerusalem Link has also been a popular case study for general publications on women, conflict, and peace.

Cynthia Cockburn has in her study *The Space between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict* (1998) examined women's anti-war activism in three communities divided by conflict: Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The case study on Israel and Palestine focuses on the activities of Bat Shalom in Northern Israel, and she approaches the work of Bat Shalom from the point of view of coexistence inside Israel. Her work has been especially valuable in providing insights to the work of Bat Shalom's Northern office. Cockburn has also interviewed the Jerusalem Link women for her most recent research *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis* (2007), where she has explored the challenges Israeli, Israeli-Palestinian, and Palestinian women face in their activism for peace.

The academic theses on the Link have in general approached it from two differing angles. The first approach is to examine the Link from the perspective of the women's movements, their development and specific features in the region, much reflecting the approach of Simona Sharoni (1995). Israeli Paulette Kershenovich of Tel Aviv University has in her Master's Thesis *A Case Study of the Jerusalem Link as Women's Dialogue Group* (2000) used the framework of the women's movements, as has American scholar Jessica Leigh Devaney in her Thesis *The Dialogical Roadmap to Peace: Israeli and Palestinian Feminists Building Bridges to Peace in the Shadow of the Wall*. Both highlight the Link as an example of women's joint venture of peace, or even in the case of Devaney, as a case study of feminist peace building praxis, a possibility for more creative, "innovative methodology" of peace building.

Tami Amanda Jacoby and Jessica P. Weinberg have in their respective Ph.D.s involving the Link focused especially on Israeli women, and Israeli women's movements. Canadian-Israeli Jacoby has in her publication *Women in Zones of Conflict: Power and Resistance in Israel* (2005)⁷ employed the Jerusalem Link as one of her case studies on women's resistance in Israel. In addition to the Israeli women's peace movement and Bat Shalom, Jacoby also researched women of the national-religious camp in Israel, and women who strive for equal opportunities in the context of the military, thus providing an analysis of a wide political spectrum of women's activism. Jessica P. Weinberg's doctoral dissertation *The Feminist Peace Movement in Israel: Palestinian and Jewish Activists' Discourses of the Nation* (2007a) examines the women's peace movement from a linguistic, discursive perspective. While I have unfortunately not had the dissertation at my disposal, I have been able to utilize an article by Weinberg, written from a similar perspective to her dissertation. The article *"The most basic threat . . . to Israeli and Palestinian women is . . . the occupation": Enduring Strategies and Shifting Tactics of Israeli and Palestinian Feminist Peace NGOs in the Post-9/11 World* (2007b) investigated the discursive and tactical changes in the work of the Jerusalem Link in the aftermath of 9/11, claiming that the new realities created by the attack caused the Link to create new strategies connecting their message to the agenda of USA and the international community.

The second approach to studying the Jerusalem Link has been to investigate it from the perspective of national differences between Israeli and Palestinian women. Harvard College student Dafna Varda Hochman (2000) has in her Bachelor's Thesis *Peace with Justice, Peace with care* examined the different visions of peace of Palestin-

⁷ The publication is based on her Ph.D. from 2000.

ian and Israeli women which she terms as "peace with justice" and I "peace with care". Jenny Rosen of Lund University for her part has focused in her Master's Thesis *A Space for Peace: National identity in Israeli and Palestinian women's dialogue* on the intersectional aspect in the working of the Jerusalem Link, and how the gender and national identities are deconstructed and reconstructed in its "border-crossing" activities. However, her thesis pays no attention to the deeper ethnical divisions within these communities such as the Ashkenazi-Mizrahi divide among the Jewish women.

While employing the Jerusalem Link as a case study, these previous studies, in approaching the topic via larger frameworks or comparative study, leave in the end very little room for an in-depth analysis of the Link itself. In this thesis, I have chosen another strategy: to focus attention on the Link and therefore provide a more in-depth, multi-faceted and vivid description of it than is possible in a short single chapter case study. Both the length of my fieldwork and the multiple materials gathered for this research enabled me to choose this type of focus. Also, my study does not automatically fall into either of the usual approaches to studying the Link, but combines aspects from both. While my research is concerned with national differences in the women's experiences of cooperation, the line of analysis runs deeper as also the possible ethnic and other differences *within* the groups are acknowledged. In addition, while recognising the importance of the women's movements as background for this research, I have approached the Link from the analytical framework of war and gender combined with an angle of women's activism from an organizational perspective. Finally, my emphasis has been foremost on the experiences of the women themselves on the activism of the Jerusalem Link, and their own definitions of their activism. Via this approach, the almost traditional-like labels of feminist or peace activism are at least partly called into question.

While many Israeli researchers and internationals have in their researches focused on the aspect of joint Israeli-Palestinian women's activism, no extensive Palestinian research in this area exists yet. The issue of joint work with Israeli women who for the Palestinian, despite their peace activism, still represent the occupying force, has probably been a sensitive topic for research but also a marginal one in face of other major issues such as women's status in the Palestinian society, women's activism within the women's movement, women's involvement in the national liberation struggle during the intifadas, and the effects of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian women. My hope is that in the future research also on this topic will emerge, as Palestinian women activists, such as the ones interviewed for this study, do provide experiences and distinct view-

points on joint cooperation between women, viewpoints that differ from those of their Israeli Jewish and international counterparts.

2. Women's Peace and Conflict Resolution Organizations

2.1 Non-Governmental Organizations, Conflict, and Peace

In July 2005 a UNIFEM press release announced the establishment of an International Women's Commission (IWC) working towards just and sustainable peace in the Middle East. Aiming to ensure the participation of women in both the official and unofficial peace negotiations in the region, founding IWC was a result of the long planning and lobbying by the two Jerusalem Link organizations Bat Shalom and JCW. As such, the event provides an excellent example of the growing importance of NGOs in the field of peace and conflict resolution: NGOs are increasingly becoming important political actors and their influence over governments and international governmental organizations (IGOs) is growing. (UNIFEM 2005; Fitzduff & Church 2004, 1) As an example, in his report to the General Assembly in 1999, the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated:

Preventive diplomacy is not restricted to officials. Private individuals as well as national and international civil society organizations have played an increasingly active role in conflict prevention, management and resolution. So-called "citizen diplomacy" sometimes paves the way for subsequent official agreements....In addressing volatile situations that could lead to violent confrontation, Governments are increasingly working in partnership with civil society organizations to defuse tensions and seek creative resolutions to what are often deep-seated problems. (UN 1999, §39-40)

A growth in the NGO power and visibility in international as well local arenas is directly linked to the growth of the NGO sector as a whole especially during the last two decades. Fitzduff and Church have described the magnitude of the phenomenon in terms of NGO attendees to UN World Conferences on Women: while the 1975 Mexico conference hosted 6000 NGO delegates, in 1980 the same number was already 8000. During the Beijing conference in 1995, 40 000 NGO delegates attended the conference; while the number of governmental delegates had tripled, the number of NGO delegates had increased to more than sixfold. The growth of NGOs focusing on conflict resolution and peace building has mirrored that of the NGO sector as a whole. (Fitzduff & Church 2004, 3-4)

According to Fitzduff and Church, especially the 1990s saw the growth of local peace building organizations in conflict zones. In the aftermath of the cold war, the nature of conflicts had changed to intra-state conflicts with massive violence against the civilian population, thus leaving room for increasing NGO involvement. While in Israel and OPT there had been civil society connections and peace organizations long before the 1990s, the signing of the Oslo Declaration of Principles in 1993 and its subsequent

agreements signalled a golden era of foreign aid to the area. International donors wanted to participate in the building of a Palestinian state, and ensure steady economic and social foundations for the peace process. The agreements signed set also the framework for joint cooperative activities between Israelis and Palestinians, as the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from 1995 had as one of its annexes the Protocol on Israeli-Palestinian Cooperation Programs where the foundation was laid for joint cultural, scientific, economic, environmental, and dialogue programmes. Consequently, there was also a significant increase in funding for these types of projects, to the extent that some scholars have spoken of the birth of a “peace industry”: new NGOs were formed, people-to-people programmes and joint projects established. However, the beginning of the second intifada in September 2000 sounded the death knell to many of these activities. (GoI & PLO 1995, §XXV, Annex VI; Kahanoff & Neumann 2007, 28)

According to the Carnegie Commission's report on Preventing Deadly Conflict, especially three categories of NGOs can contribute to conflict prevention: human rights and other advocacy groups, humanitarian and development organizations, and finally the so called “Track Two”⁸ groups which can pave the way for official negotiations. Furthermore, NGOs especially focusing on conflict resolution may carry out various activities including monitoring and reporting on conflicts, mediation, convening conflicting parties, capacity building, and assistance to democratic processes that reduce the possibility for violence. (Carnegie Commission 1997, 111,113; Gidron et al 2002, 8-9) Gidron et al have, for the purposes of their comparative study of organizations in Israel⁹, South Africa, and North Ireland, termed these kinds of organizations as peace and conflict resolution organizations (P/CROs), “citizen’s voluntary/non-governmental organizations advocating peace/reconciliation/coexistence between the major contenders to the conflict in the three countries/regions, on the basis of mutual recognition and/or use of dispute-resolution strategies as a means of addressing conflict.” (Gidron et al 2002, 15)

⁸ “Track two” or “second track” diplomacy refers to diplomacy practiced by influential members of the conflicting communities for the purposes of ending the conflict and building peace. As such, the second track diplomacy complements the official diplomacy or “first track” diplomacy. (Davies & Kaufman 2003, 2)

⁹ The Israeli NGOs studied at the third phase of the research included Alternative Information Center, Bat Shalom, Council for Peace and Security, Oz ve'Shalom, Peace Now, Physicians for Human Rights, Rapprochement, Women in Black and Yesh Gvul. The Palestinian NGOs included: Children of Abraham, Rapprochement Beit Sahour, Alternative Information Center, Committee for Dialogue of Peace Forces, and the Jerusalem Center for Women.

The P/CROs existing in conflict zones seem to share common features across regions. Gidron et al have approached the P/CROs as hybrid organizations, existing at the interface of NGOs and their respective social movements, combining characteristics of both NGOs and social movement organizations (SMOs). P/CROs liken regular civil society NGOs by being non-governmental, non-profitable, and at least partly voluntary organizations. On the other hand, they share some characteristics with SMOs as they "make moral claims that are in opposition to those held by dominant political elites, and they most actively challenge and seek to change the forces that fuel and maintain the conflict and prevent peace." Because of their moral claims and activities, the P/CROs are likely to raise more antagonism than average NGOs. Finally, like many SMOs, P/CROs usually identify themselves as being part of a group of reconciliation and peace organizations, and as hybrid organizations constantly change their activities in the face of changes in the political and social environment. The overwhelming majority of P/CROs employ more than one single tactic, and are engaged in the fields of public education, service provision, bridging, protest, lobbying, and research. However, each P/CRO also seems to develop itself a specific mix of tactics that suits its purposes best. (Gidron et al 1999, 277-278, 291-294; Gidron et al 2002, 17; Meyer 2004, 168-169)

Mari Fitzduff has argued that there are several important ways in which NGOs can and already do contribute to peace building and conflict resolution. Among other things, NGOs are often able to engage in activities in which states or governments cannot be involved, and have more freedom than governments in choosing with whom of the conflict actors they can communicate with. NGOs have also facilitated meetings and dialogues between politicians of the opposing sides. Additionally, NGOs are an important force for gathering constituencies for peace, and can advocate for issues of justice and human rights both during and after conflict. As existing outside the governments and other official bodies, NGOs are likely to find creative ways to reframe conflicts and suggest new solutions for protracted conflicts. According to Fitzduff, NGOs can also facilitate and advocate for the inclusion of women to conflict resolution and official peace processes of which the case of IWC is exemplary. (Fitzduff 2004, 8-13)

With the growing power of NGOs, their role in conflict zones has also faced criticism. As humanitarian relief organizations or development agents, NGOs can influence the conflict not only positively, but also negatively. According to Jonathan Goodhand, these negative impacts of assistance on the one hand, and the possible positive contributions of aid towards conflict resolution on the other, have still not been investigated enough. It has also been claimed that international donors, by funding "stand

alone, 'projectised' peace building approaches" not only depoliticise the field of peace building but also use NGOs as a "fig leaf" for their inaction. Compartmentalizing conflict resolution and peace building, it is argued, distances them from politics and issues of power which many times are the root causes of conflict. This ambiguous approach might result in supporting peace building on the surface, without tackling the real dynamics of the conflict that always includes both politics and power. (Fitzduff 2004; Goodhand 2001, 11-12; Goodhand & Atkinson 2001, 37)

Moreover, where NGOs are multiple, they often do not act in coordination with each other, and even compete for the same resources. NGOs are also far from being a homogenous group in terms of their approaches to conflicts, and, in accordance, the solutions suggested by them can differ enormously. In addition, NGOs, unlike governments, are also not directly accountable to the general public as such, but rather to their own membership and their financial donors. In OPT this has led to an on-going discussion on the setting of agenda-priorities. In this debate, the ownership of the NGO agendas is called in to question on the axis between "local" and "Western" agendas. As an example, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) officials have been claimed to consider issues such as gender, human rights and democracy as over-funded fields, reflecting donor-interests. PNA has also been tended to view the increasing power of the NGOs suspiciously, and perceive them as threats to Palestinian national unity; many Palestinian NGOs have strong international ties, and are engaged in service provision parallel to PNA, thus weakening its control over services and resources. (Fitzduff 2004, Hanafi & Tabar 2003, 209; Hassassian 2002, 132)

Finally, also the agenda of peace has been, in the context of OPT, often seen as a Western priority and as a delusion, being very far away from the realities of continuous military occupation. Linda Tabar and Sari Hanafi have noted that aid to the Palestinian territories during the Oslo period already assumed an end to the conflict, while the conflict in fact proved itself to be cyclical and, in the end, was renewed. Furthermore, the Palestinian research group of the Gidron et al research group found the general definition of the term P/CRO poorly applicable to the Palestinian context precisely because of the on-going conflict. According to Hassassian, organizations tackling the issue of peace were only beginning to emerge in the aftermath of the first Oslo agreement in 1993, and were still a small minority, as peace in the Palestinian context has been mostly articulated as a strategy for the national struggle. Only very few NGOs in OPT would have therefore met the general definition of a P/CRO, and the Palestinian research team thus had to modify the term to fit the Palestinian context. According to

the team, a Palestinian P/CRO was an organization which had as its agenda a non-violent resolution to the conflict and therefore

...sought understanding both within Israel and abroad for the social, political, historical, and cultural context of the Palestinian people, often involving consciousness-raising activity, human rights advocacy, dialogue, and the provision of services intended to familiarize others to the Palestinian concern for justice, thereby finding partners who could be mobilized to end the source of Palestinian grievances. (Hassassian 2002, 135)

It was therefore important for Palestinian research group to highlight the specific motivations of the Palestinian P/CROs, searching understanding and support for the Palestinian struggle. Also Petra Tötterman in her comparative study of women's peace organizations in Israel and Palestine noted the absence of peace organizations on the Palestinian side, and therefore focused her study on "peace oriented organizations", yet concluding that "the absence of the clear-cut objective of 'peace work' is striking among the selected organizations." Moreover, Tötterman has, in a similar way to Hassassian, concluded that peace was strongly connected to the absence of the Israeli occupation, and establishing a Palestinian state. (Hassassian 2002, 132, 134-135; Tabar & Hanafi 2003, 207; Tötterman 2002, 14-15)

2.2 Women, Conflict, and Women's Organizations

Women's peace and conflict organizations (WP/CROs), such as the subjects of this research Bat Shalom and JCW, are a common phenomenon in virtually every conflict zone. Although no comprehensive data on the number of women's peace organizations exists to date, it seems that they exist all over the world, operating on all levels from grassroots to international. (El-Bushra 2007, 136) Establishing women's organizations which carry out multiple tasks and employ a variety of methods has offered women one avenue to participate in peace building activities. However, research on P/CROs has not yet to a significant extent addressed women's organizations operating in conflict zones from a solid theoretical perspective. While much academic research on women and war has recently been produced, academic theoretical analyses focusing especially on women peace organizations *as organizations* are still virtually non-existent. Most researches still approach the topic of "womeandpeace" and even the various women's NGOs from the perspective of development practitioners, and either through the lenses of peace movements and women's movements or through the perspectives of individual activists. While these aspects are not unimportant they have also contributed to the lack of understanding of the factors that contribute to the special features of WP/CROs as organizations. When defining a women's peace and conflict resolution organization, I

argue, one needs to take into account the distinct experiences of women during war and violent conflicts, experiences that are significantly different from those of men and boys. A women's peace organization, in addition to working towards peace and an end to the conflict, would therefore in defining its objectives and in choosing its tactics use the specific experience of women during war as a starting point.

In relation to war and peace women play many important roles. For long literature on women and war, much like Western feminist literature on third world women on the whole, portrayed women only as powerless victims, in need of protection, and the multiple experiences of women and their agency during times of war and peace were overlooked. At the same time, the men were simplistically seen only as fighters, war heroes, and soldiers, thus the perpetrators of violence. It has however become evident that the roles of women during and after conflict are multidimensional and break these traditional gender roles: women are fighters, mothers of soldiers, community leaders, welfare workers, doctors and nurses, and peacemakers. Women can motivate their men to fight and fight themselves, especially in wars that have to do with national recognition. These women's ways of expressing aggression in times of war still remain an understudied area. Despite these multiple roles available for women to occupy, Pankhurst claims that women often have very little choice and influence on which position they end up taking. (El-Bushra 2007, 134-135; Jauhola 2002, 6-8; Mohanty 1991b, 57; Pankhurst 2004, 13-15; Turpin 1998, 7-9,11)

Research on women and war has demonstrated that men and women experience war and peace in different, gendered ways. Even more, while women's experiences of war vary according to time, place, class and ethnicity, among other things, there are also remarkable similarities between these experiences. Wars and violent conflicts seem to, as an example, imply a shift in social responsibilities from men to women, as men become engaged in fighting and women are left to deal with the management of everyday life. The workload of women thus increases as they become responsible for taking care of their children, feeding their families, and supporting the victims of warfare. Women can also take on roles that previously were almost solely assigned to men. Thus, conflicts carry with them the possibility of reorganizing social relations - a possibility that often remains unclaimed. (Jauhola 2002, 8; Pankhurst 2004, 15; Turpin 1998, 4)

On the other hand, with the changed nature of warfare to incline massive violence towards the civilian population, women seem to be encountering suffering and violence in distinctive ways. Violence directed at women is often sexual: rape, harassment, abduction, and forced prostitution. There is also evidence that domestic violence

increases in times of war. Furthermore, the majority of the world's refugees are women and girls. These and other women's specific concerns, based on the gendered experiences of warfare, are mostly left out of the agenda of official peace negotiations. Moreover, after the fighting is over, women are usually expected to return back to their traditional roles, and thus the space for women's action seems to diminish when peace finally arrives. (Jauhola 2002, 6; Pankhurst 2004, 17-18; Turpin 1998, 4-5, 10)

Investigating conflicts in Africa, Judy El-Bushra discovered that it was the specific experiences of women during war which explained their involvement in peace building. Especially the experiences of trauma and resilience contributed towards this end. Also Cockburn, analysing three women's anti-war groups in Northern Ireland, Israel and Bosnia Herzegovina, noted that one of the similarities between these groups was that they all, having made the conscious choice to work on a women-only basis, had "a hunch...that there is something at stake for women *as women* in conflict and peace processes." El-Bushra has further argued that these women's activities, first born out of daily necessities of survival, have been later sustained because of their empowering elements. Therefore, women's peace activism can, according to El-Bushra, better be explained by pragmatism, as a response to the surrounding situation, than for example by the essentialist notion of women as more peaceful than men. (El-Bushra 2007, 135)

Besides the specific experiences of women during violent conflicts, women in non-Western countries seem also to become active under very different conditions from Western women. Tami Jacoby, among others, has in her research emphasized that in contrast to the Western women's movements, "non-Western women have tended to become politicized within the broader contexts of civil-ethnic conflicts and developing states", mobilizing together with their men against colonial rule and oppression, for democratisation or national freedom. Mohanty has noted that this inevitable link between feminism and liberation movements has been one of the biggest challenges Third World feminists have posed to the Western feminists. Cynthia Enloe for her part has also highlighted these empowering effects of nationalism for many women, their national consciousness opening them the door to engage in the public sphere as actors. Moreover, nationalism as an ideology, according to Enloe, has had to include women perhaps to greater extents than other ideologies, even if this has been in the form of emphasizing women in their traditional roles as nurturers and transmitters of culture. Indeed, women as "mothers of the nation" and "keepers of the national culture" have been central images for nation building. (Enloe 2000, 61-62; Jacoby 2005, 4; Mohanty 1991a, 10)

However, despite the mobilizing effects of nationalism, its relationship to feminism has been ambivalent. The paradox of women empowered through national struggles has been that they also encounter what Tami Jacoby has termed the "mobilization-marginalization phenomenon". Women mobilized via nationalism have had to face patriarchal structures everywhere around them, and, like many times in evolving states, they have been asked to lay aside the question of women's rights in favour of national unity and the rights of the collective. The challenge for women is therefore to link the liberation of women to the national liberation. According to Lois A. West, it is this double agenda of advancing both their rights as women and national rights, and working out the contradictions between these two aims, that makes these women's movements "feminist national movements". (Jacoby 2005, 4-5; West 1997, xxx)

For women's activism for peace, nationalism also poses many important challenges. As nationalism by nature deepens distinctions between "us" and "them", it can serve as a way of explaining inequities between two national groups, having an effect also on women's efforts to create transnational ties and solidarity. According to Enloe,

a woman who becomes politicized through nationalism is more likely to see a man from her community as sharing common destiny than women from another community, especially if those women, no matter what their politics, come from a community that has treated her with derision." (Enloe 2000, 61-62)

Yuval-Davis has further noted that many women from the developing world would not necessarily agree unconditionally to link feminism and pacifism because "they could not afford the luxury of being anti-militaristic, because the national liberation of oppressed people can only be carried out with the help of an armed struggle." (Yuval-Davis 1997, 113)

It is therefore at the crossroads of national liberation, gendered nature of warfare, and the struggle for women's rights that the women's organizations in conflict zones become established, form their agenda, and carry out their work. Krishna Kumar, researching women and women's organizations, noted that there were especially four factors that explained the emergence and re-emergence of women's organizations in post-conflict societies. Firstly, as a result of the social, economic, and political transformations during conflict, new spaces for activism were created for women in the public sphere, and "[m]any women acquired new confidence, new skills, and a new vision for the future." After the war was over, these women were well equipped to continue their activism and head their own organizations. Secondly, many women leaders had

become increasingly disappointed with their parties which had been committed to the aim of gender equality but had never delivered their promises. Thirdly, reforms initiated by transition governments opened up new possibilities for establishing women's organizations, and fourthly, the provision of international assistance through NGOs increased the number of international organizations. In all the countries Kumar studied, namely Cambodia, Bosnia, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala, and Rwanda, donors had made conscious efforts to strengthen the existing women's organizations, and even supported the establishment of new women's groups. (Kumar 2001, 29-32)

An illustrative example of the emergence of new types of women's organizations is the case of OPT in post-Oslo state-building period. The marginalization of Palestinian women and gender equality within the Palestinian nationalist struggle has been seen as one of the central factors contributing to the emergence of a new Palestinian women's leadership, belonging to what Amal Kavar has called Palestinian women's centers movement. These professional research institutes and women's centers have come to form the new institutional leadership of the emerging autonomous women's movement in the Palestinian territories. Women involved in this movement have been characterized by Kavar as well-educated, academic, political, and feminist women whose agenda focuses around empowering women, women's political education, and advocating for women's rights. As a distinction from the traditional women's leadership of centralized political women's organizations and women's charitable societies, these new organizations have occasionally criticized the political parties for obstructing the advancement of women, and have also in general been more vocal on women's rights than their predecessors who tended in their discourse to be limited by the national struggle. (Hanafi & Tabar 2006, 202; Kavar 1998, 237)

2.3 Analysing the Work of Women's Peace Organizations

Women's organizations in conflict zones are most often categorized by either their levels of operation from grassroots to the international, or the central areas of their work and/or by tactics used by them. Kumar has, accompanied by among others El-Bushra (2003, 2007) and Mazurana and McKay (1999), noted that women's organizations in post-conflict societies work in a variety of areas. Kumar typified these areas as activities for improved health, income-generating activities, work on social problems, democracy and human rights, and advocacy for gender equality. (Kumar 2001, 35) El-Bushra has argued that it is exactly this broad spectrum of activities by women's peace organizations that makes categorizing them very challenging. As part of International Alert's project *Women Building Peace: Sharing Know-how*, a framework for documenting

women's peace activities was developed where the activities were divided into the five following categories:

1. Survival and basic needs
2. Peace building and mediation on different levels
3. Advocacy
4. Promoting women's inclusion in decision-making leadership
5. Community outreach and rebuilding (El-Bushra 20003, 40-41)

Unlike El-Bushra, Kumar does not term the women's organizations he studied as peace organizations as such. One could therefore question, should for example mere organizing of food and shelter by women, even in post-conflict settings, be defined as peace activism. However, El-Bushra suggests that the mere variety of activities engaged by women and women's organizations during conflict and in post-conflict settings reveals the need to broaden the term peace into a definition that "encompasses the totality of women's needs and interests and which puts the accent on structural change towards justice and towards representativity in political decision making." In practice, women are already implementing this broad meaning of peace by carrying out their multiple repertoires of activities. (El-Bushra 2007, 138)

The notion of El-Bushra on the broad concept of peace can further be elaborated through the terminologies generated by peace researcher Johan Galtung. Galtung has, among other things, made the distinction between negative and positive peace, negative peace referring in simple terms to the mere absence of violence. Positive peace for its part could become expressed in terms of cooperation, harmony, and integration. Violence, in turn, can according to Galtung be termed either as immediate, direct violence or structural violence which is manifested in exploitation and marginalization. In addition, Galtung has approached violence as obstacles to basic needs satisfaction. In relation to these definitions of violence, three different kinds of approaches to peace can also be separated, namely peace keeping, peace making, and peace building. Peace keeping refers to avoiding violence and keeping the warring parties apart, and peace making to pattern of conflict resolution where "a solution has been arrived at when an agreement has been negotiated that can be ratified by both sides". Finally, peace building can be defined as an approach where better and peaceful relationships are being built, deeper-lying problems in relations dealt with, and the parties to the conflict brought together. (Galtung 1976, 282-283, 296-297; 1985, 145-147, 150-151)

Feminist Scholars have further elaborated on the terminology of Galtung, paying attention to the specific forms of violence that women have to face. For example Brock-Utne has further developed a framework separating between unorganized violence and organized violence, therefore leaving room for individual experiences of violence, and violence during times of peace. As an example, direct organized violence in her model refers to war, and unorganized direct violence to domestic violence, sexual violence and street violence, among other things. Susan McKay has further developed the framework of Brock-Utne to grasp the specific features of women's experienced both during and after armed conflict, concluding that for example excluding women from peace processes and channels of influence is in fact a form of structural, organized violence. (Brock-Utne 1989, 44, 47; McKay 2004, 160-161). With respect to Galtung's definitions of war and peace, one could therefore argue that women tend in the activism adhere to a concept of positive peace with the absence of also the specific forms of violence women have to face, including domestic violence, and the lack of personal choice and influence.

Finally, WP/CROs can be examined through the qualities of the tactics employed by them. The essentialist versus social constructionist debate within the feminist movement extends itself also to the body of research on women and war, and therefore to the way in which the activism of WP/CROs is understood. According to the essentialist approach, women are seen as different from men *by essence*, and this also explains the differences in their behaviour in times of war. The defining factor is thus biological sex that brings with it certain qualities, "biological determinism". Feminists adhering to the essentialist approach could thus claim that women are inherently more peaceful, think of the general good and compromise, whereas men are seen as more competitive, violent and individual by behaviour. Often, the reproductive role of women "as mothers" has been emphasized as a reason for women to be peaceful, and motherhood has in fact been an important component in many women's peace initiatives. However, the essentialist view, argues El-Bushra, "fails to challenge the very stereotypes of masculinity and femininity which need to be transformed if conflict is to be managed non-violently." (El-Bushra 2007, 140-141; Jauhola 2004, 12-13; Yuval-Davis 1997, 111)

According to the social constructionist approach on the other hand, the roles of men and women are always socially constructed and vary according to time, place and culture. In every society, there are socially approved ways of behaving for both men and women, gender roles, and learning them is part of the socialization process. Social constructionists would therefore claim that women and men appear to be perceiving

things differently, not because they are essentially different, but as a result of socialization. Furthermore, gender roles are always connected to other determinants such as race, class and religion, and therefore it is not possible to make oversimplified generalizations on the qualities of women based on merely their biological sex. Much of the research on women and conflict combines components from both schools of thought in their argumentation, as do women's peace and conflict resolution organization in their practical work. (El-Bushra 2007, 140-141; Jauhola 2004, 13)

Birgit Brock-Utne, examining the work done by women peace movements, has claimed with a rather essentialist tone, that the following three characteristics are central to their tactics: concern for human life, non-violent methodology, and transnational, transpolitical activity that aims at reaching women from all sides of the conflict. (Brock-Utne 1987, 37, 62-63, 13) Nira Yuval-Davis for her part has highlighted the transversal politics some women groups have employed as tactics in their transnational dialogues. The term transversalism was originally developed by Italian feminists to describe the dialogue of “shifting and rooting” where

[t]he idea is that each participant in the dialogue brings with her the rooting in her own membership and identity, but at the same time tries to shift in order to put herself in a situation of exchange with women who have different membership and identity. (Yuval-Davis 1997, 129-130)

Transversalism thus transgresses the problematics of universalistic claims of “global sisterhood” but also the relativistic claims of no dialogue being possible because of different points of departure. Furthermore, transversalism allows maintaining one’s own values while understanding also the position of the other. Simultaneously, there is a recognition that the other side is not monolithic but consists of people holding different values. This enables people of different rootings connect with others holding the same values, and therefore “[t]he boundaries of a transversal dialogue are determined by the message, rather than the messenger”. (Yuval-Davis 1997, 129-131)

2.4 Women’s Organizations and/or Feminist Organizations?

Regarding this research, the question of feminism as an organizational ideology in addition to “peace” is important. Often the terms women’s organization and feminist organization have been used synonymously, although not all women’s organizations determine themselves as feminist, and not all feminist organizations are necessarily women’s organizations. Krishna Kumar, studying women and women's organizations in post-conflict societies defined a women's organization as a voluntary organization which is

led and managed by women, and which promotes the welfare of women and gender equality. (Kumar 2001, 29) Patricia Yancey Martin, summing up research and academic writing on feminist organizations in Western Europe and the USA, suggests that an organization is feminist if it either has a feminist ideology, has feminist guiding values, has feminist goals, produces feminist outcomes, or it was founded as part of the women's movement. Thus, filling any of these five criteria, the organization could therefore be defined as feminist. It is noteworthy that applying Martin's framework, Kumar's "women's organizations" would also match the criteria of feminist organizations, illustrating well the closeness of these terms.

However, Martin's definition of a feminist organization can only fully be understood after a closer examination of what exactly constitutes a feminist ideology, feminist agenda, feminist values or feminist outcome. While Martin¹⁰ herself adheres to a very basic and broad definition of feminism simply as the admittance of the oppression of women, and striving to improve this situation, using and defining the term is not unproblematic, especially in the context of third world. As Byrne and Lentin have noted, the word "feminist" has today become the "f word" to increasing numbers of Western women, and many non-Western women hesitate using the term. While for the Westerners feminism might have bad connotations because of being too political or even old-fashioned, for the Third World women feminism often implies cultural imperialism, racism and the hegemony of Western middle-class white women. Many non-Western women have used this experience of alienation as a starting point for their Third World Feminisms, and connect gender specific forms of oppression to other forms of oppression such as race, colonialism, and ethnicity. Therefore it is important to note that feminism(s) and the feminist movement(s) is characterized by varieties and is multidimensional in terms of taking "different forms at different times, in different areas of the country, in different socioeconomic and political contexts, and among women of diverse racial, ethnic, class, and age groups". These differences become strikingly visible when observing the numerous different kinds of organizations the feminist movement has produced. (Byrne & Lentin 2000 b, 1-3; Ferree & Martin 1995, 7, 8-9,11; Martin 1990, 184-185, 189; Mohanty 1991a, 7-10; Mattila & Vuola 2007, 211) When analysing the organizations of this research, I have therefore decided not to adhere to a predetermined definition of feminist and feminism, but rather have focused on how and if the organizations and their members see themselves as feminist.

¹⁰ Martin employs definition developed by Mary Katzenstein (1987).

In addition to the five determinants of a feminist organization, Martin proposes five other dimensions through which differences between feminist organizations can be compared: the structure, practices, membership, scope and scale, and external relations of the organization. According to Martin, there has been no agreement on the essential characteristics of a feminist organization. Some scholars have argued that features such as collectivism, respect, democracy, and non-oppressiveness are at the heart of feminist organizations. Acker, among others, has claimed that becoming a hierarchical organization reflects the powerlessness of feminist organizations who in order to gain funding must "conform or die". The basic assumption here is that by institutionalization feminist organizations have already compromised in terms of their values and ideology. However, Martin argues that there is no specific structure that would *per se* qualify as feminist and that "feminist organizations are...hierarchical as well as collectivist, national as well as local, illegal as well as legal, dependent as well as autonomous". (Acker 1995, 138, 140-141; Ferree & Martin 1995, 6-8; Martin 1990, 184-185, 188-190, 195-196)

Finally, Martin and Ferree have argued that in studying feminist organizations the aspect of women's experiences within these organizations is important. These organizations imply transformations for their member as "organisational experiences can shape worldviews, politics, and a sense of self in relation to society." Furthermore, Martin and Ferree have stated that individuals should not be seen as mere resources for their organizations but also the ways in which women utilize these organizations and the experiences gained through these organizations should be considered. The organizational experiences of women could therefore provide an important new source for developing social theory. (Ferree & Martin 1995, 6-8) In line with this statement, I argue that in studying WP/CROs in zones of conflict, it is important to pay attention to the organizational experiences of women, as these experiences might in fact offer previously unexamined ways towards understanding the various linkages between gender, war, and peace activism, and the change towards more peaceful societies.

3. The Institutional Basis of the Jerusalem Link

3.1 Towards Joint Work: Founding the Jerusalem Link

The historical roots of the Jerusalem Link have almost assumed a legend-like status among its supporters and members. Even the younger members, who were not directly involved in founding the Link, are very aware of its "glorious and courageous past": political women talking to each other during a time when it was officially still denied. An Israeli law from 1986 had banned any contact with PLO members, a ban that was only lifted in 1993, despite the fact that PNC had recognized Israel's right to exist already in 1988. This ban, however, was in practice defied by many Israeli activists and leftists politicians by meeting PLO members abroad. These higher level meetings were usually facilitated by a third party, simply because they took place outside Israel and OPT. (Golan & Kamal 2001, 214; Greenberg 1993) Following in the same line, the establishment of the Link was preceded by meetings between Palestinian and Israeli women abroad, illustrative of Fitzduff's claim on how civil society, in this case European, can facilitate the dialogue between opposing sides of the conflict.

Part of Israeli and Palestinian women had been introduced to dialogue already in the NGO summit held simultaneously to the UN 1985 World Conference on Women, and they continued the dialogue after arriving back to their home countries. In 1989 an international women's conference called *Give Peace a Chance, Women Speak Out* was organized by the Jewish Secular Cultural Community Centre in Brussels and convened by Belgian Jewish Simone Süsskind. The meeting culminated into a joint declaration by the Palestinian and Israeli women attendants, emphasizing the need to end the occupation, right to self-determination for the Palestinians, and the right for each side to determine their representatives. The Brussels Declaration provided the basis for the continuation of joint Israeli-Palestinian women's activity, as the Israeli women established the Israeli Women's Peace Net, Reshet, and Palestinian women for their part widened their activities under the Palestinian Women's Higher Council. An Israeli-Palestinian steering committee coordinated the joint activities. (Golan & Kamal 2001, 201; I13; ILA Reshet JL Proposal n.d., 2-3; BSA JL Decl. Brussels Declaration June 1989)

The Second Brussels meeting again convened by Simone Süsskind, and supported by the European Commission, was held in September 1992, in order to examine the future of the joint activities of Israeli and Palestinian women. An Israeli Jewish participant to the Brussels meeting described the atmosphere:

I(sraeli)1: it was clear we needed to go one step further, I know there was a lot of thinking going about and... I actually thought of the fact that we should set up one center and during the course of the meeting, it came out, two centers...

Thus the idea of the Jerusalem Link had been born: two separate organizations, and an Israeli-Palestinian coordinating committee supervising the joint work. The Jerusalem Link proposal emphasized the idea of the Link as "unquestionably novel and untested". Furthermore, the concept was considered to be

a pioneering attempt to build an institutional tie between Israelis and Palestinians based on the principles of equality and political reciprocity. As such it will provide a model for coexistence between the two peoples, highlight the joint interests of women on both sides and emphasize the commitment of those involved to a just political solution to the Arab-Israel conflict based on U.N. resolutions (ILA Reshet JL Proposal n.d., 1, 7)

The Link was therefore seen as a prototype for something new and alternative, a self-image that many feminist organizations have also adopted. (See Martin 1990, 192) It is noteworthy that unlike in much discussion on institutionalization and feminist organizations, institutionalization at the early stages of the Jerusalem Link was not considered problematic. On the contrary: the lack of institutionalization was seen as one of the main reasons for the difficulties in previous joint activities, such as the lack of coordination. (ILA Reshet JL Proposal n.d., 5-6)

The women involved in the process which lead to the establishment of the Jerusalem Link were very prominent, as Hanan Ashrawi had been nominated as the spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation to the peace process, and also Zahira Kamal and Suad Amiry were part of the delegation. On the Israeli side, Shulamit Aloni of the Meretz party had become the Minister of Education of the Rabin government, and in addition six elected Knesset members had been active in Reshet. (ILA Reshet JL Proposal n.d., 4) Participating in these first joint public meetings was naturally not without challenges despite the high profile of the attendants. Simona Sharoni has maintained that the joint peace conferences of Israeli and Palestinian women especially in this early period still tended largely to dismiss the asymmetry between the two groups. (Sharoni 1995, 145) In accordance, one of the Palestinian interviewees recounted the difficulty of the decision-making process, when she had been asked to join a conference in Brussels:

P(astinian)3: ...my immediate reaction was of course not...I don't mind of course...talking to any European, but to go and start a dialogue with Israeli women, that was unthinkable...And basically I felt, maybe because of this question of occupation where there was no equality between both partners, I mean always Israel the occupier is the dominant side dic-

tating...everything to the Palestinians and I thought I don't want...put myself in this inferior position, why should I.

In the end, after careful considerations, the woman did decide to participate in the meeting; after all, it was held on a neutral ground, she felt she had nothing to lose, and at least the aim was to be equal partners. However, she also related how heated the discussions could be in the beginning:

P3: ...the first meeting you know you could hardly say it was a dialogue because everybody was shouting at each other you know and just getting out all this anger and bitterness but I think once...we finished with that, once we overcame this psychological barrier then we started communicating to each other.

It was clear that the different circumstances of the Israeli and Palestinian women, representing the occupier and the occupied, could not be ignored. The mechanism to deal with these differences on an organizational level was therefore built in the Link: two separate organizations as opposed to a one joint one. Each organization could therefore maintain its autonomy, and address issues within its society, while at the same time it was possible for the two centers to join their forces in activities which reflected their mutual interests, such as human and women's rights, and issues concerning the peace process. (ILA Reshet JL Proposal n.d., 6-9)

The agreement of the Jerusalem Link was finally signed in 1993 by four Israeli and four Palestinian women on behalf of their organizations which were being duly registered. The document emphasized the joint coordination of activities with equal representation from both organizations, but also maintained the independence of both centers. The organizations would among other things have their separate offices, bank accounts, staff, and management. The official inauguration date of the Jerusalem Link was planned to coincide with the International Women's Day on 8 March, but was delayed because of the massacre in Hebron on 25 February¹¹. In the end, the inauguration took place on 16 March at the Ambassador Hotel in East Jerusalem. (BSA JL 1993 Agreement §2-3; BSA JL 1994 Invitation; Golan-Agnon 2005, 129) Having its roots in the pre-Oslo era, the context surrounding the Link had changed considerably, as connections between Israeli and Palestinian politicians were no longer prohibited but supported.

¹¹ On February 25 1994 Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein shot dead 29 Palestinian prayers inside the Ibrahimi Mosque, and several other were killed in the riots that followed.

3.2 Bat Shalom and Jerusalem Center for Women as Organizations

The different kinds of challenges facing the two organizations of the Jerusalem Link become very well highlighted in their locations. The Jerusalem Center for Women (مركز القدس للنساء) office is located in the East-Jerusalem suburb of Beit Hanina, in the same building with the like-minded organizations of the Women's Studies Center and the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC). The manifestations of the Israeli occupation are literally right outside the door, as the office is located between the checkpoint of Al Ram and the Israeli built wall, both which you can directly see from the office windows. Going towards Jerusalem from the office, one always has to pass the check point, but on the other hand, the location enables those women of JCW not holding permits to enter Jerusalem reach the building. (See Attachment 1 and Picture 1)

Bat Shalom (בת שלום), Hebrew for the daughter of peace, is situated in the centre of Western Jerusalem, on King George Street (See Attachment 1 and Picture 2), just a few steps away from the famous shopping street of Ben Yehuda. However, as a Bat Shalom member put it, from the office one also "has a good view to all the bombings" as the central shopping streets of West Jerusalem have been targeted by suicide bombers several times. (Field Notes 11 February 2005) An Israeli interviewee described the challenge for the Israeli side:

I11: ...it is not easy going and meeting, or calling women to join to meet the Palestinian women when you see horrible pictures in the TV. Or the café next to your office was blown up few days ago. These are ...very traumatic news.

As I started my fieldwork in the autumn of 2004, the office had just moved to King George Street from its previous location on Emeq Refaim Street, also a famous restaurant and business street in Jerusalem. In 2003 a café very close to the previous office, Café Hillel, had been targeted by a suicide bomber, killing seven people and wounding many others.

In the Northern Israel the situation has yet different characteristics. Israeli Palestinian towns and villages exist side-by-side Jewish towns and kibbutzim, but have huge differences in living standards. Furthermore, these two communities seem to have separate lives, barely meeting each other. Bat Shalom has also a Northern branch, referred to as Bat Shalom Zafon or Bat Zafon for Peace and Equality. It was established in 1993, as women from the North wanted to have activities closer to their homes, in the area of Megiddo, Nazareth and the Valleys. (See Attachment 1) The members of Bat



Picture 1: The Wall in Al-Ram



Picture 2: King George Street in Jerusalem

Zafon consist of both Jewish and Israeli Palestinian women, and the emphasis of its activities is on inequality in Israel and civil rights. Therefore, "there are in a way two Bat Shaloms" (I4) with different focuses in their practical work. (Bat Shalom 2008)

Today, Bat Shalom and JCW alike are established and professional organizations in their countries with several hired staff members. In 2004-2005 Bat Shalom had seven staff members: a director, a political coordinator, an administrator, and four project coordinators. Two of the coordinators worked as regional coordinators in Bat Zafon, and also the working hours of the political coordinator were divided between Jerusalem and the North. The JCW office also had the staff of seven including a director, a public relations officer, two project coordinators, a media coordinator, an accountant, and a secretary. (See Attachment 5) According to Gidron et al, formalization and professionalization are dominant features of P/CROs, as these processes help the NGOs gain legitimacy in their respective societies, and make access to funding easier. (Gidron et al 1999, 285, 287)

Both Bat Shalom and JCW are governed by a board of directors. The board of JCW in 2004-2005 consisted of ten women; a number has been reduced to eight women in 2008. (JCW 2008) The board members come mainly from the Jerusalem and Ramallah areas. So far official elections of the board have only taken place once, at the time of the establishment of JCW. However, there has been some change in the composition of the board as some of the members have stepped down. Otherwise, it is mainly the same women that have been part of the board from the beginning.

P4: So, yes we don't have many...elections...but it's important also to take into consideration, these members of the board, they have a political and a historical background in this work. And ... we don't want to keep the same board forever I mean, but we are interested that these people are now here and at this period of time.

As these women were also involved in the establishment of the Link, it has been in the interest of JCW to keep them on its board of directors, although there have been internal discussions on having new elections. The board of JCW is also partly structured, as it has a fixed head of the board of trustees, Salwa Hdeib-Qannam, whom the director of JCW consults among others in administrative issues. The board meets at a varying pace several times a year, and the decisions are not made by voting, but through discussion and consensus.

The board of Bat Shalom in 2004 consisted of 25 women. This board of roughly twenty women is elected every second year as part of the annual meeting of the members. During the annual meeting in February 2005, the board election thus took

place as scheduled. In principle, one can be a board member for six years, but in practice also in Bat Shalom there are women that have been on the board from the beginning. A specific feature of Bat Shalom board has been the membership of present or previous women Members of Knesset from the centre-leftist parties such as Labour, Hadash, and Meretz. Bat Shalom board meetings take place regularly once a month, and the board does not have a fixed structure and the chairmanship is being circulated. Like in JCW, also in Bat Shalom the decisions of the board are based on consensus, which, one of the interviewees emphasized, was a result of the feminist ideology of Bat Shalom:

As part of our feminist perspective...we try to get to decisions by consensus, which means that even if there are you know kind of a principal dilemmas in politics etc we take our time in that's kind of a process of trying to find within this what are the angles and the points where we can agree upon. (I11)'

This collectivist decision-making pattern has been connected by some to an “ideal type” feminist organization. (Martin 1990, 195)

Bat Shalom and JCW have very different membership procedures, and consequently their memberships vary considerably in size. The JCW members, the JCW general assembly, consisted in 2004 of 42 women in addition to the board. The role of the general assembly is to discuss general issues considering JCW, and define JCW policies in political and other issues. The JCW board nominates new members of the general assembly, and the possible new members are usually consulted with prior to their joining, and there is no paid membership. Also, not anybody can become a member:

Q(uestion): So if I wanted to become a member, what should I do?

P4: I don't know if you can become a member.

Q: So there are some restrictions?

P4: I mean, yes...I think you have to be Palestinian first.

Q: And... women?

P4: Yes...Yes a woman (laughing).

The procedure of electing new members is thus very formal, and the possible candidates undergo a careful scrutiny. Bat Shalom, on the other hand, has much more informal membership procedures: there are no limitations of membership, and even a foreigner could become a member. One of the main requirements for becoming a member is to pay a membership fee, required by the Israeli law, but this fee is in practice only symbolic. Also, the new member has to commit herself to the ideology and political principles of the organization. Bat Shalom has around 300 members, but the number has been

constantly going down. So far only women have been members of Bat Shalom, similarly to JCW.

Despite the declared aim of equality, being sister-organizations in a situation of on-going Israeli occupation, has posed specific challenges to maintaining this equality between the organizations in practice. This has implied paying careful attention to what might at first seem as little details or unintentional mistakes, but in fact come to symbolise the overall power balances of the conflict. Illustrative of this was a discussion on the letter-head used by Bat Shalom which in the eyes of the board of the JCW had given a wrong impression on the nature of the Jerusalem Link:

We have noticed the design of your letterhead used in your correspondence and wish to point out hereby that heading your letters by (The Jerusalem Link - A women's Joint Venture for Peace) has led to a great misconception, especially by donors and foreign organizations, of what the Link is...the heading may give the impression to outsiders that your center is the umbrella organization and we are just subordinate which therefore goes counter to the principle of parity... (Letter from Director of JCW to Director of Bat Shalom 16/10/1994 BSA JL 1994)

In the end, it was agreed that the letter head with the Jerusalem Link logo would only be used in joint communication concerning both of the organizations. (BSA JL 1995 Letter from Director of JCW to Director of Bat Shalom 6/05/1995)

However, the women had differing points of view concerning the institutionalizing of the relationship and becoming professionalized NGOs. Some felt that it was a mistake to institutionalize the network:

I8: I think the worst thing that happened to political action is NGOs. Nothing could have been worse. We have all become professionalized...it has killed a lot of the political contents and made it into nice tiny cutes of projects. And in those terms it is very emasculated in terms of political action.

According to this interviewee, institutionalization had tamed down a lot of the political activity. From another perspective, a Palestinian interviewee noted that institutionalizing the Link had closed JCW off from involvement of other Israeli movements and organizations, and therefore limited its membership and constituencies. (P9) During 2004-2005 JCW women were in fact discussing opening up relations to other peace groups in Israel.

On the other hand, the institutionalization of the contacts of the Israeli and Palestinian women was also highlighted as a success story, and an end in itself:

P7: I think it is important in the sense that it is the only program, or organized relation that have been institutionalized between Palestinians and Israelis, and survived for ten years despite all the turmoil, the political turmoil. So it's an achievement for women.

For another interviewee also, the mere fact that the Palestinian women had been institutionally willing to be under the same umbrella with an Israeli organization, had already been important, regardless of what the women could in the end do with that institutional tie. (I2) Finally, an Israeli interviewee emphasized the continuation of an organization as opposed people-to-people types of informal contact, without a formal structure:

I12: ...first of all person to person is not political... And secondly it doesn't have the continuity that an organization [has]... The political framework overwhelms them. That won't happen to us because you know if there're just two left, one Palestinian and one Israeli, we've got the framework...

Being an institutionalized organization could therefore, according to this interviewee, carry its members through difficult times and changes in unpredictable political environments in ways that non-institutionalized cooperation could not. This finding is consistent with what Cynthia Cockburn found to be the case in Cyprus where some activist women had arrived at the conclusion that "earlier women's bi-communal activities had failed to survive...precisely because they had had no durable organizational structure." In the end, the Cypriot women established one joint NGO. (Cockburn 2004, 155, 163)

3.3 The Women of the Link

Many of the prominent women that established the Jerusalem Link continue to be active in Bat Shalom and JCW still today, but new members have also joined the organizations. One of the key perspectives to analysing the Link is therefore the membership characteristics of its organizations: which sections of their societies the members represent. The following Tables 1-4 clarify the composition of the group of 21 women interviewed at the second stage for this research. While not a large enough sample to make profound statistical claims, situating the women in terms of ethnicity, religion, and nationality offers a prism through which to view the composition of the membership of the two organizations.

The bulk of the members of both Bat Shalom and JCW are middle-aged women, reflecting the reality of many other P/CROs. (Meyer 2002, 178) According to a rough estimate, the average age of the members of Bat Shalom ranges between 55-60 years of age, and the majority of women in JCW are respectively in their 40s or 50s. In accordance, majority of the interviewees were mature women, as shown in Table 1: two thirds of the interviewees were born prior to the 1960's, and were thus over 45 years of

Table 1: Age Distribution of the Interviewees

Years of Birth	Israeli	Palestinian	Total
1920-1929	1		1
1930-1939	3	1	4
1940-49	3	2	5
1950-1959	2	2	4
1960-1969		4	4
1970-1979	3		3
Total	12	9	21

Table 2: Ethno-Religious Background

Religion	Israeli	Palestinian	Total
Jewish	10		10
Muslim	1	7	8
Christian		2	2
Unknown	1		1
Total	12	9	21

age. On the Israeli side 75 percent and on the Palestinian side over half of the interviewees were thus above this age, while the youngest interviewees on the Palestinian side were born in the 1960s and on the Israeli side in the 1970s. No women less than thirty years of age belonged to the board of JCW, although JCW also has younger members.

Majority of the members of Bat Shalom are Jewish Ashkenazi women, reflecting the composition of the Israeli peace movement and Israeli feminist movement on the whole. The members largely also belong to what an interviewee called the "bourgeois middle-class." (I11) Traditionally the Israeli feminist movement, the peace movement, and the women's peace movement have been dominated by the Ashkenazi Jewish, who generally form the first class citizens in Israel. The Mizrahi women, belonging to the poor majority of Israeli Jewish, have been less represented in all these movements. (Dahan-Kalev 1997; 2001; Meyer 2002, 178) Because there were much more divisions among the interviewees from the Israeli side, I have further examined their background by their ethnicity along the ethnic divides of Ashkenazi-Mizrahi-Israeli Palestinian, as well as by the countries of birth which in the case of the Israeli Jewish women varied greatly. Majority of the interviewees on the Israeli side were Jewish Ashkenazim by their ethno-religious background, and only one of the twelve interviewees was Mizrahi. In addition, two of the interviewees were Israeli Palestinians. (See Tables 2 and 3) Majority of the Jewish interviewees stated during the interview that they were secular Jewish, and therefore religion did not play an important role in their lives. In addition, one of the Israeli-Palestinian interviewees was a Muslim, while the

other refrained from answering questions regarding her religion. An interesting additional factor was also that half of the Israeli interviewees had not been born in the region but had immigrated to Israel. Bringing in the ethnic factor, two thirds of the Israeli Ashkenazi interviewees had immigrated into Israel. (See Table 4)

Most of JCW members are, like the Bat Shalom members, academic, political and/or activist women, many of them holding at least a Bachelor's Degree. There is an effort to maintain balance between the representation of different political parties and religious backgrounds among the members, also on the level of the board. Politically, many of the members are independent, the main political parties represented being Fatah, FIDA, and the communist party. Majority of the women belonging to JCW are Muslim, reflecting the over all religious statistics in OPT, but there are also members belonging to the Christian minority. Also one of the Palestinian interviewees refused to reveal her religious background during the interviewee, but I was able to find this information from another source. As such, the JCW membership, composed on academic women, is exemplary of the organizations involved in the women's centers movement. Kawar had furthermore claimed that maintaining multiparty representation on the board level has been especially important for politically oriented Palestinian women's organizations, such as JCW, to foster good relationships to the political parties instead of raising antagonism.

From the perspective of connections to their respective social movements and networks there are interesting similarities and differences between Bat Shalom and JCW. On the whole, while both organizations in their activities combine peace, politics,

Table 3: Ethnic-National Background of the Israeli Interviewees

Ethnic-National Background	
Israeli Ashkenazi	9
Israeli Mizrahi	1
Israeli Palestinian	2
Total	12

Table 4: Countries of Origin of the Israeli Interviewees

Countries of Birth	
USA	3
Great Britain	1
Chile	2
Israel	6
Total	12

and women's issues, Bat Shalom and its members are much more identified through the women's peace movement inside Israel and JCW and its members through their connections to the Palestinian women's movement and especially its women's centers movement. At the same time, the various connections held by the board members of JCW and Bat Shalom illustrate on the one hand how the women's peace movement in Israel and the women centers movement in OPT act as important sources for personnel and activists to the NGOs, and on the other hand how the same women are active in more than one organization within their social movements. The figure in Attachment 6 is an effort to visualize some of the various organizations, forums, and political parties where the interviewees stated having been active in addition to Bat Shalom or JCW. All of the Bat Shalom interviewees had been and still were active members in other peace groups and women's peace groups in Israel, such as the Women in Black movement, and Machsom Watch. Also on the organizational level, Bat Shalom has been a member of especially peace and protest oriented coalitions such as the Coalition of Women for Peace, Coalition against the Wall, and the Committee against Housing Demolitions. (Bat Shalom 2004)

JCW on the other hand, as part of the Palestinian women's centers movement, is as an organization very much involved in the current affairs of the Palestinian women's movement, and a member of coalitions that concentrate on developing the status of women and women's rights inside OPT. JCW had been involved actively for example in the discussions concerning the election law and women's quota, and modifying the family law. The activism and positions held by the JCW board members highlight the connection, as many of them had been involved in political women's organizations or other women's groups. In addition, JCW has also been a member of the Coalition Committee for Jerusalem, focusing on the rights of Palestinians in the Jerusalem area. However, working closely with an Israeli sister organization has also cost JCW some networks, as the organization has not been accepted to be a member of the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO). (Farhat-Naser & Svirsky 2004, 281)

Women from both sides of the Link have had connections to the leftist parties of their communities, but also to the more dominant parties of Fatah and Labour. Although Bat Shalom board did include political women such as the former members of Knesset Naomi Chazan and Tamar Gozansky, the Israeli women still seemed to be more on the fringes of their society than their counterparts in JCW (I13):

P5: At least on the Palestinian side, the Jerusalem Link framework is officially sanctioned, I mean officially accepted and so...if there is a political decision to include women, they will

be the Jerusalem Link women. Because on the Palestinian side they are representatives of various political parties, leaders.

JCW board members have held influential positions inside the Palestinian civil society as well as in politics as for example Zahira Kamal at the time of interviewing was the Minister for Women's Affairs, and Salwa Hdeib her Deputy Minister. Furthermore, Hanan Ashrawi is a Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member, heading her own NGO MIFTAH, and also Lamis Alami, Maha Abu Dayyeh, and Amal Khreishe were heads of organizations. Lamis Alami is today the education minister of the interim government of the PA. As both Bat Shalom and JCW have had as their members women who also held positions in governmental institutions such as the Knesset or PLC, there seems to exist a certain fluctuation between these two spheres of activism: governmental and non-governmental. While some interviewees appreciated the involvement of political women in the Link, forming the bridge from the grassroots to the political level and vice versa, some also saw their involvement as problem, as "it is not easy for them to get outside the politics of their parties" (P7). These women, precisely because of their political involvement, had simultaneously their parties to answer to, and their political careers to think about.

Because of the prominent profile of the board members on both sides, the Link faces criticism of being the cooperation of the elites of both societies. For example Nahla Abdo has argued that "it is almost impossible to find camp refugee women in Palestine or the diaspora who can accept the idea of dialoguing with the enemy." (Abdo & Lentin 2002, 2) During the interviews, many of the women themselves addressed this problem, and the inability of the Link to gain more support on the grassroots level. While many studies classify the Jerusalem Link and its organizations as grassroots organizations (See for example Mazurana & McKay 1999), it is therefore difficult to assess to which extent this claim is valid as at least on the membership level both of the organizations are composed of middle-class, well-educated, and well-off women.

Both Bat Shalom and JCW have had discussions around broadening their membership. One of the most problematic issues for broadening the basis of the Jerusalem Link is the language used in its meetings. Although in the inner activities of Bat Shalom and JCW Arabic and Hebrew are used as the working languages, the joint meetings of the Link take place in English. Those members of Bat Shalom and JCW who are not proficient in English therefore could not participate in the joint meetings even if they wanted to. Even for the majority of the board members who participate in the meetings, English is their second or a third language, with the exception of the Bat Shalom

women with immigrant backgrounds from English-speaking countries. Women from both boards found the usage of a foreign language a problem since expressing oneself in a foreign language can be difficult, especially in issues that are sensitive.

In an effort to broaden its constituency, Bat Shalom in the past made an effort to include more Mizrahi women, but the project failed. Yet there is an on-going effort to have at least some Mizrahi representation on the board level. Nowadays also more and more Israeli Palestinian women are on the board. Entering a board of academic, political, middle class women has proved to be challenging for women from a different kind of background:

I10: I'm young, and my education is not exactly on the political issues and the rights. I'm, my profession is something different. So, many times I speak from my intuitions... from my heart, from what [is] being connected to myself... And others are talking from their political...experience... So it is different, I do not feel equal... usually these [Ashkenazi women]... are not nice to somebody who is new, who is young...I didn't find it very soft to enter this circle of Bat Shalom... It need from me lots of work to keep telling myself...it is important to keep coming to the board meeting and to the political committee.

Both organizations of the Link have stressed the importance of increasing the number of young women as their members, as the average age among the memberships in general is quite high.

On the whole, the interviewees from neither side saw the cultural differences between the women to be a significant factor affecting the joint work, although their existence was recognized. As an example, an Israeli interviewee claimed that the way of behaving on the Palestinian side was more formal and polite, while on the Israeli side women were more "brash, very direct", and also the concepts of time differed. (I13) However, these differences were seen as marginal, and the occupier-occupied dimension was seen as a much more central factor to the cooperation. Some interviewees also claimed that the cultural differences amongst the Israeli members of the Jerusalem Link with Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, and Israeli Palestinian women were more essential than the cultural divide between the Israeli and Palestinian participants. All and all, the fact that women, although coming from different societies, had similar somewhat similar profiles was used to explain why culture really was not an issue:

P3: Maybe if they have worked with other groups than, more problems would have come to the surface...I mean Hamas women...with the Orthodox Jewish women, they'll get along very, pretty well you know. Because they've got also so much in common so it's only identifying the right group of women to work with. (laughs)

In the Jerusalem Link, the women of “the same kind” (I10) from their respective societies had thus met each other.

3.4 Joint and Independent Activities

Bat Shalom and JCW, like the bulk of P/CROs, employ a variety of tactics in the activism. Both organizations have independent activities that address issues in their societies, and joint activities within the framework of the Link. For the part of Bat Shalom, one of the interviewees described the activities as having three dimensions. The first dimension includes working with Israeli women and issues inside Israel, the second working together with Palestinian women mainly through the framework of the Link, and the third working with the international community. (I11)

The independent activities of Bat Shalom have included among other things political lectures and discussions, and political tours. In addition to these activities, Bat Shalom has annually organized the events of *Sukkat Shalom* and Land day in the North, and an alternative independence day. Furthermore, there have also been movie screenings, demonstrations, and reactive activities, as in the case of Silwan, an Arab neighbourhood near the old city of Jerusalem that had received massive demolition orders in 2005. Bat Shalom held meetings with the representatives of Silwan, organized a tour of the area, and a working day together with other peace groups. (See Picture 3) Another example of the activities of Bat Shalom in 2005 was a series of meetings under the heading *Space, Memory and Control*, focusing on erasing memories and control of land, "occupation inside the state of Israel". The meetings included a field trip to the village of Lyfta, and to the areas of Ramle and Lod. Lyfta is an old Arab village which was emptied in 1948 of its residents by Haganah¹². The tour to Lyfta was guided by a woman who had been 12 years old when they had to leave the village:

As we descended the slopes of the hill towards the valley together with the old woman, she started, little by little, to cry (and at the same time curse Ariel Sharon). She was already so old that her steps were no longer light and so, as we stood by her house, she was only able to look at it from afar and spoke: "I wish I could go and see my house"...but she couldn't any more...Visiting the village was clearly hard for her, I cannot forget the sound of her weeping, the tone, as we arrived in the village. It had such depth into it. I for my part must of have sworn all the Finnish curse words a hundred times inside my head during that trip. This history and this present in this country are totally awful, full of injustice. (Personal Email 26/01/2005)

Situated at the entrance of Jerusalem, the village of Lyfta is a visible sign for many of the central questions surrounding the conflict: the refugee problem, national identity, the

¹² A Jewish military organization that later became the core of the Israeli Army.

right of return of the Palestinian refugees, and memory. (Bat Shalom Email Invitation 06/01/2005)

The activities of JCW for its part are organized around five bigger components of peace building, human rights advocacy, intra-Palestinian dialogue, and training and empowerment. The Independent activities of JCW have included workshops and trainings for women, demonstrations, and working with issues such as Palestinian rights in Jerusalem, women and housing demolitions, and working with women that have political prisoners in their families. JCW has also been raising the consciousness of Palestinian women on the UNSCR 1325. In 2005, JCW was also involved in encouraging women to participate both in the local elections and the coming legislative council elections, which after delays finally took place in January 2006. One of the ways to address women and voting was broadcasting audio ads on local radio stations:

Hind: Wow! This is so comforting Zareefeh.

Zareefeh: What's that that made you feel so?

Hind: Each list has women in it.

Zareefeh: And are you going to vote for the women?

Hind: Of-course! Who can represent us as women better than women themselves and I will give my vote to the woman that deserves it.

Zareefeh: Yes true and as said that women are half of the community, and as we managed to get and win in the local councils elections, we will vote to women nominees in the legislative council.

Hind: True this is one of our basic rights to have someone to represent us as women.

Zareefeh: You can't be more right so come on, let's move and go to give our votes. Our votes are so precious and we will be asked about it by our conscious.

Your vote is a right that you have to preserve and use it well so don't loose this right and don't give it but to who deserves it. Jerusalem Center for Women. (JCW 2006, 16)

After the local council elections, JCW also met with the women that had won in the elections in order to train them to promote themselves better, and inform them about the Palestinian elections law. (JCW 2005a, 11, 16)

For the two organizations of the Link, having established connections with a sister organization from the other side of the conflict has also offered an access to the general public of the other. For Bat Shalom the relationship to JCW has worked in two ways: firstly showing to the Palestinian women that there is an alternative voice inside Israel "that not everybody in Israel are occupiers and fascists" (I11), and secondly, bringing the reality of Palestinian women's lives back to the Israeli public. Also for JCW the connection with Bat Shalom has offered a pathway to

show the Israeli people...that their enemy the Palestinians...this is how they saw us, their neighbours are you know civil people, we... are normal ordinary human beings as much as them. (P8)

In a similar way to the Israelis, it has been important for the Palestinian women of JCW to address the Israeli public to demonstrate that there exists a partner for peace talks, and to inform the Israeli audience on the experience of Palestinians under occupation.

Since their establishment Bat Shalom and JCW have had several kinds of activities together including youth camps, dialogue groups, demonstrations, revising the political agenda of the Link, and publishing joint statements on important political issues. In 2004-2005 the joint activities included working together on the IWC initiative, the Women in Black Conference, and a joint consulate tour to catch the attention of the international community regarding housing demolitions and forced evictions of Palestinians in the Jerusalem area. (See Picture 4) JCW and Bat Shalom have also been involved in public correspondence, as part of which the organizations publish statements in Israeli and Palestinian newspapers, and attended international conferences together. (JCW 2006, 7)

The political climate surrounding the Link very much affects its functions. Escalations in the conflict such as Israeli invasions or suicide attacks cause tension in joint work while in a period of relative calm the Jerusalem Link meetings take place more often. In times of tension, it is often only the two directors that meet and uphold the formal connection. The Link was born in the age of Oslo, when the general atmosphere was more positive and joint work easier and more accepted in both societies. The international community also openhandedly financed the activities and projects of the Link. One of the biggest and most visible projects of the Jerusalem Link so far has been organizing the event *Sharing Jerusalem: Two Capitals for Two States*¹³ in 1997. The happening was financed by the European Commission, and organizing it was preceded by achieving a common standing on the point of Jerusalem; that it should be "two capitals for two states." (See Attachments 7 and 8) Many of the interviewees emphasized that in achieving an agreement on the Jerusalem issue and organizing the campaign, the Jerusalem Link was ahead of all the other peace groups. The event included a five-day series of events such as alternative tours to the reality of Jerusalem, three symposia, art exhibitions, concerts and demonstrations and vigils. A concluding rally from East Jerusalem to West Jerusalem under the heading *Sharing Jerusalem* was attended by an estimated 3500 people. (BSA Rep *Sharing Jerusalem Summary and Report*)

¹³ For more information on the event please consult the Jerusalem Link publication *Sharing Jerusalem* (Badran et al n.d.).

The Sharing Jerusalem project also clearly illustrates the difficulties and obstacles the Jerusalem Link faces because of its activism. While the event did manage to gain both national and international publicity and “Jerusalem *almost* looked like the city it could be”, the project also faced criticism from both sides. On the Palestinian side, the Israeli restrictions on Palestinian residents of Jerusalem continued unchanged throughout the project, and some Palestinians interpreted the project as normalizing with the occupier while the occupation was still going on. The Israeli side of the project faced threats to their lives, the Jerusalem municipality declined the hanging of the Sharing Jerusalem posters, ticket offices refused to sell tickets for the events, and there were difficulties for finding galleries that would host the art exhibitions and concerts. In addition, the then Mayor of Jerusalem Ehud Olmert heavily criticized the event in public. Finally, Sinead O’Connor, who was supposed to perform as part of the event, faced a death threat and had to cancel her participation. (BSA Rep Sharing Jerusalem Summary and Report)

Despite the difficulties, the Sharing Jerusalem Campaign all and all was highlighted as one of the success stories of the Link. Since those times, the Link has lived through the deaths of both Rabin and Arafat, the failure of the Oslo process, and the beginning of the Second Intifada with its large-scale violence. Many of the activities possible in the past are no longer viable, at least in the eyes of the Palestinian women:

P9: ...before 1999 we work as we have peace and even we start to make some kind of projects which I consider now it was normalization projects. So we start to talk about coexistence, and for me I can't deal with coexistence now.

The events that were possible under a different political climate were, in the context of the second intifada, seen as part of normalization with the occupier. Many of the interviewees on both sides noted that during its early days the Link used to be much more active than it was today. The women felt that only few joint activities took place, and the two boards met rarely. The focus of the activism of both JCW and Bat Shalom was in 2004-2005 very clearly on their independent activities.

Several women from both sides expressed their disappointment in the working of the Link, its inactivity, and ineffectiveness. After years of activity, the question “what did we achieve” was painful to ask. (P2; P3) An Israeli interviewee maintained that the Link had not succeeded but instead had been “defeated every where in any way possible” (I8) while another one maintained: “...if we had succeeded...there would be a Palestine alongside Israel and...we wouldn't have what we're dealing with today.” (I1)

The membership of the organizations of the Link has not grown but diminished during the years, and the situation on the ground especially for the Palestinians was not improving, on the contrary. In face of these changes for the worse one of the interviewees saw that the work of the Link was in fact “becoming nonsense” (P10) or “foolish” (P2).

In general terms, both sides felt that the other side was not doing enough in terms of the Link and its objectives, and felt the need for further development of the joint work. Furthermore, the women were very realistic, or even pessimistic, about the possibilities for influencing the general publics and the overall developments of the conflict. According to a Palestinian interviewee, the emphasis of the work had moved towards protesting, thus reactive activities. Although she had not been actively involved in the Link for a while, she still did not want to place the blame on it but on the wider political context:

P10: No, I can't say I'm disappointed in the Link, I'm disappointed with the atmosphere surrounding the Link. The restrictions, the helplessness that the people are feeling ...but the Link tried its best...I blame the political situation, I blame the politics, they failed. I believe they are big failures, from both sides.

She felt that both Israeli and Palestinian politicians had not succeeded in bringing about peace to the region, and therefore the Link had never been given a fair chance to succeed in its objectives.

Despite its defects, for many of the interviewees the significance of the Jerusalem Link was in it being one tool amongst others for fighting the occupation, and maintaining the communication channels to the opposing side of the conflict, “keeping alive a space for a potential political movement” (I12). Many also valued the uniqueness of the Jerusalem Link as one of the few institutionalized Israeli-Palestinian relations that had survived for more than ten years of political turmoil, and its capability to publicly raise issues that have for long been taboos such as the questions of Jerusalem and the right of return (I8). Simply by its existence, the Link could also be perceived as a proof that women from opposing sides of the conflict “can have the same vision.” (I9) For one of the interviewees, the Link also represented a symbol of a future Middle East:

I10: ...and this...gives me the...imagination of the...kind of state or society that I would love to live in, or see my daughter enjoying it. In the future, seeing people with their different interests, different political way of view and yet collaborating together in order to keep this place for the advantage of all of us.

3.5 Under the Gaze of International Eyes

The international factor in the birth of the Jerusalem Link, and the continuation of its activism, has been undeniable. Weinberg, among others, has concluded that both organizations have been from the beginning "linked to the agendas of the international community". The principles and ideology of the Link have resonated very well with the agenda of many international donors. As an example, the European Community had already in its Venice declaration from 1980 stressed the importance of including the PLO to the negotiations and the right of Palestinians to self-determination - therefore it is not surprising that the EC supported the second Brussels meeting in 1992 which brought together Israeli and Palestinian women politicians, and later largely funded the establishment of the Link. With its declared aims of sharing Jerusalem, the establishment of two states, international involvement in the peace process, and the respect for the relevant UN resolutions, the Link principles have correlated with the desired end results of the international community at large. (European Community 1980; Weinberg 2007b, 105) On of the Israeli interviewees furthermore maintained:

I4: And the international community likes the symbols of, as I said the glorified future of the Israeli-Palestine...and the Bat Shalom is part of this, this symbol of things to come.

According to this interviewee, already the structure of the Jerusalem Link, composed of women from both sides of the conflict, attracted the international community, as it in a symbol-like manner represented the peaceful coexistence of the two nations of Israel and Palestine.

Because of the membership fees are low or non-existent, Bat Shalom and JCW both have relied heavily on foreign funding, and seem to have drawn financial support from somewhat similar sources, and partly also from the same donors. In the beginning, the main donor was the European Commission which funded the establishment of the organizations for the period of two years with a grant of 171 000 USD per organization. Today, funding still comes mainly from Europe and North America, and for example JCW has no Palestinian or Arab donors. Both organizations have received funding from foundations, development organizations, church based organizations, and women's organizations and funds. As an example, the Swedish women's organization Kvinna till Kvinna has supported both Bat Shalom and JCW, as have Global Fund for Women and Norwegian Church Aid. Special sources of funding for Bat Shalom have been the Jewish leftist foundations, as Gidron et al have termed them: "Jews in the Diaspora that shared the similar vision for peace as P/CROs". (BSA JL 1993 Agreement §

4; P4; BSA JL 1994 EC Financed T/A Contract 10/11/1993; BS 2005a; Gidron et al 1999, 284; JCW 2008; Weinberg 2007 b, 105)

On the other hand, the international community has all the time been part of the agenda of the Jerusalem Link, and its organizations. For Bat Shalom, working with the international community has offered a possibility to gather international pressure against the actions of the Israeli government, and to have its own voice alternate voice heard, and gain support that otherwise would be unattainable:

I11: Bringing and introducing them the voice of the Israeli left, that not everybody in Israel thinks the same, because there is this notion that people abroad think, "well, everybody in Israel thinks the same". The voice of the Israeli Peace Camp is almost not heard abroad. And of course, part of the work is solidarity because it is very hard for such long years belonging to a such small and outcasted group within Israel, you know, we are not very popular here.

While inside Israel Bat Shalom has belonged to the group of very small, marginal leftist movements, its connections to the international community have aided it to gain support for its agenda. However, one of the Israeli interviewees was puzzling with the question, whether she was doing more good or bad by appearing in public. She was worried that her appearance might in the end be used to make the Israeli public image better: "for the Israeli...official position...I'm great: we're a very democratic society, see this asshole saying these stupid things, and we let her talk." (I8) Even if this was the case, part of the Palestinian women still felt that the voice of the Israeli activists condemning the occupation and the actions of the Israeli government was much stronger than their voice or even the voice of international activists; Palestinian voices could always be dismissed as partial and the international voices as anti-Semitic. (P9)

The women of both JCW and Bat Shalom have been popular speakers and invitees to international conferences dealing with women, war, peace and conflict resolution. Some interviewees even claimed that the Jerusalem Link in fact has been more known abroad than locally in Israel and Palestine, as a Palestinian interviewee maintained: "It is easy to get acknowledged...from people in Europe or the States, from outside the country. Inside the country, we have a lot of problems." These international ties have linked Bat Shalom and JCW women to other women from other zones of conflict, and with important international supporters. Simone Süsskind has maintained her relations with the Jerusalem Link, and among others Member of the European Parliament Luisa Morgantini has very openly supported the work of the Link. The women of the Link were very aware of the fact that they were favoured by the international commu-

nity, but that did not stop them from also being critical towards the amount of attention they were receiving:

P8: ...it's very vulgar to...see a Palestinian and an Israeli talking together and not pulling each other's hairs and so on in front of the public and it looks SO good you know, people love it. To see a Palestinian and Israeli and people from the conflict...sleeping in one bed and sharing breakfast together and sharing the panel together and talking to people...

Q: What do you think about that?

P8: I'm sometimes very cynical about it, very cynical, because it seems you know like there's nothing wrong actually in reality.

This Palestinian interviewee wanted to emphasize that even if the women of the Link appeared in public together, the Israeli occupation was still continuing, and thus there was a problem to be solved.

Between the Link and the international community there thus seems to exist a mutual interdependency. While the international community is the main source of funding and a source of support for the organizations of the Link, the international community also needs the Link. Supporting the Jerusalem Link has been a political choice, as through giving voice to it, the international community has chosen to support a certain vision of peace in the region. However, at the same time one could claim that supporting single initiatives like the Link and its projects for the international donors also is an easy way to demonstrate commitment to peace building in Israel and Palestine while questions such as trade and the use of international boycotts have remained untouched areas. Still, it would not be fair towards the Link to reduce it to a mere expression of the interests and vision of its international donors. In the support of the international community, the women of the Link have found the resources and means available for them to realize their own vision of the future in the region, especially in the absence of such supportive means from their own communities. Therefore, if anything, the case of the Link demonstrates the creativity of women in searching for support to their cause. As we shall see in Chapter 6, the women of the Link have also come to target the international community to claim their rights to be represented in the peace process, and demanded support for their activism.



Picture 3: Lily Traubmann of Bat Shalom with the children of Silwan.



Picture 4: Amal Khreishe leading a demonstration in Bilin during the Women in Black Conference in August 2005. Next to her, to the right, is Luisa Morgantini, Member of the European Parliament.

4. Nationalisms, Divisions, and the Conflict

4.1 Hating and Loving the Country of Israel

Bat Shalom has many inner divisions, which affect its day to day work and also the connections with the Palestinian side of the Jerusalem Link. On virtually every issue which is disputed within the Jerusalem Link, the Bat Shalom women also disagree amongst themselves. As we saw in Chapter 3, the membership of Bat Shalom is very heterogeneous in terms of ethnic and national backgrounds, as the organization has both Israeli Palestinian and Jewish members, and among the Jewish members there are both Ashkenazi and Mizrahi women. Furthermore, the women differ from each other in terms of their relationship to nationalism and the nature of the Israeli state on the continuum between anti-Zionism and Zionism. In addition, being involved in political peace activism such as the Jerusalem Link has been demanding for the Israeli women with regards to their identity and their relationship to their home country.

For many Bat Shalom activists the reality of the Israeli military occupation accompanied with having connections to the Palestinians has implied continuous elaboration of their own motivations and aspirations towards the state of Israel. One of Israeli interviewees had emigrated from Europe in the 1950s, prior to the Six Day War, in order to "stop being Jewish", part of a minority, and also, influenced by the holocaust, in order to find a safe place to live. She came to build an egalitarian society in Israel:

I4: I knew...[that] another injustice had been done but I thought OK but it can be rectified...when it became a colonial society [in 1967], and that was horrifying that it could happen, then I became realizing that the Jews are really just like any other people and once you give them power nobody ever wants to give their power...

Another Israeli woman taking part in Bat Shalom's Land Day in Nazareth spoke in similar terms of the dilemma she had come to face in Israel:

I came to Israel from Canada. I didn't want to be a "Jew in Canada" that you can point a finger at, that she is Jewish. There was a hotel with a sign saying: Dogs and Jews not allowed. My dilemma is that today I'm part of a group that discriminates against others, it is hard. How much am I doing, am I doing enough? (Field Notes 2/4/2005)

Coming to Israel, these women had had high hopes, and had wanted to shake off the vulnerable position of a persecuted and oppressed minority – and then found themselves to be part of an occupying power, the oppressors.

The stories of Bat Shalom Jewish women born in Israel, the *sabras*,¹⁴ had been somewhat different but at the same time similar to the immigrant women. A native Israeli Jewish woman contemplated on her experiences during the Bat Shalom Land day event:

I did not choose to live here, I was born here. My parents came here before the Second World War. My uncle came here in 1925, and bought the land from the Arabs. Not expropriated, bought, I did not feel that we had taken something away...I did not grow up with any feelings of blame, my political education begun later. I grew up with the stories of what had been done to my family in Europe...That injustice cannot be undone by doing injustice to another. (Field Notes 2/4/2005)

For her it was important to emphasize the fact that she had been born in the region, and that her family had obtained the land by legal means. While this woman had never been a part of a minority abroad, the history of holocaust was still very much part of her family history, underlining the importance of the history of the persecution of Jews for the existence of a Jewish state.

Against the history of the Jewish people, the reversed reality of the Jewish becoming an oppressing power was a highly disappointing one to many Israeli women, but at the same time it acted as a motivator for changing it. The Israeli Jewish women, whether born in the area or not, felt anyway very connected to the land: their home and the home of their children. The dilemma of belonging and not belonging at the same time, of "hating my country and loving my country" (I4) has therefore been an ever present tension facing the Israeli activists conscious of the reality of occupation. This dualistic relationship was very well highlighted by an Israeli Jewish interviewee, who elaborated on her relationship to the Israeli government:

I3: ...I hate them! (laughs)...I am a Israeli, this is my identity, I'm connected to the place, I was born here, I'm very connected to the language and to the culture...but I hate what they are doing in my name, I hate it...when ever I'm listening to the news or read the newspaper I feel like pulling my own hair.

For many of the Israeli women therefore, participating in Bat Shalom and the activities of the Link had offered a partial solution to the dilemma, as through their activism was clearly motivated by the wish to make Israel a better place to live:

I9: ... I'm doing it not only... for the Palestinian people but I'm doing it also for my sake, for my country and for my future, for my children... I mean it's not just something altruistic, it's very egoistic.

¹⁴ Sabra as a term refers to a Jewish Israeli born in Israel. Sabra is also a cactus fruit that is said to conceal a sweet and soft interior beneath its tough and thorny exterior.

Also, while the Israeli women found the word patriot mostly disturbing, some at the same time pointed out that if the word was to be used, they felt to be better patriots than the right wing Israelis. The motivations for being a peace activist could be therefore articulated in terms of nation building.

The Israeli women of Bat Shalom had very different perspectives on what kind of a state Israel should be. This was directly linked to the positions the women had taken towards Zionist nationalism, wanting a homeland for the Jewish people. For the Zionist women in Bat Shalom being a Zionist meant first and foremost believing in the right of existence of a Jewish state, a state that is democratic but by nature Jewish:

I6: ... because I feel that after so many years the Jewish people has... earned the right...to have a state of their own where they can feel as a majority and feel secure...Exactly the same way I feel that the Palestinian people has earned a right to have their own state where they can have their own tradition...and lead their own life...within independent state...Palestinian state...

The existence of Israel was interpreted by this interviewee against the background of the persecution of the Jewish people, but at the same time, this did not exclude the possibility of the existence of a Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state.

While the Zionist women of Bat Shalom did not see any contradiction between Israel being a Jewish state and a democratic state, the anti-Zionist members of Bat Shalom saw it differently: Israel should stop being by nature a Jewish state and instead become a state for all its citizens including the Israeli Palestinian minority. For the non-Zionists, Israel could not be a democratic state as long as it remained by definition a Jewish state. These women also found the notion of nationalism problematic:

I8: I'm a socialist feminist internationalist OK, so patriot for me is like yuck...My national identity affects the fact that because I'm an Israeli and a Jew and live in Israel, I have to be against the occupation.

This interviewee furthermore claimed that for her personally one of the most important achievements with regards to Bat Shalom and the Link was the fact that she, as an anti-Zionist, had been capable of working together with Zionist women for such a long time. The number of Zionist women in Bat Shalom has diminished with the beginning of the second intifada, and the radicalisation of the positions taken by Bat Shalom. However, even the non-Zionist members of Bat Shalom considered it important that the Zionist women remain within the organization:

I12: we have got to fight through to make sure that we do not exclude...the Zionists, and if we do that then we have no function whatsoever. Then we're simply a solidarity organization and there's nothing to be learned from that. Absolutely.

Having the few Zionist women has offered Bat Shalom a pathway to the ideology and political thinking of the majority inside Israel, a bridging factor without which the organization would become even more distanced from the Israeli mainstream.

Most of the Israeli Jewish women did not feel that they had been harshly criticized because of their activism in the Jerusalem Link, as many of their friends and close circles were composed of like-minded people. Also, according to many interviewees, most Israelis were not aware of the existence of Bat Shalom and the Link, and therefore criticism, if it happened, was more on a general level. It is clear, however, that the Israeli leftist activists do face harsh criticism from their fellow citizens, and are by some Israelis perceived as traitors who naively believe everything that the Palestinians say, and are willing to give the Palestinians "everything" while in reality the Palestinians are just using them as "a Trojan horse"(I4). These somewhat difficult circumstances become evident when trying to find Bat Shalom office for the first time: there is no sign at the street level entrance, and one has to be specifically looking for the office in order to find it. Furthermore, while inside, the doors are always kept locked as to keep unwanted visitors away from the office.

One of the Israeli Jewish interviewees, living on a kibbutz, related her experiences of being leftist activist during the first intifada, and after the beginning of the second intifada:

I5:...in the kibbutz...in 2000 they looked at me as a traitor...someone from the kibbutz said that they should put a bomb into my home...There were people that did not give me a ride from the kibbutz...And I've lived in the kibbutz for thirty years...It makes me hard to explain my identity...Also during the first intifada...they were calling me, when we went to Women in Black in the kibbutz that we are Arafat's whores and things like that... And once there was the Oslo agreement ... they completely forgot saying it... and they came to say oh, like, we won...the same people...

The same woman, coming from a secular home and background, felt at the same time that her identity as Jewish was something that was forced on her, using as an example the October 2000 events in Northern Israel. The beginning of the second intifada not only touched the Palestinians of OPT, but also caused restlessness among the Israeli Palestinian population. The Israeli army and the police reacted violently to the demonstrations, shooting dead 13 demonstrators. During the violence, the Israeli Palestinian

friends of this interviewee kept calling her crying, and described her the shootings and the violence that was taking place:

I5: And I wanted to get there but I couldn't because the police closed the road...There was a funeral in Nazareth and I wanted to get there...And [Name of an Israeli Palestinian] said: don't come because I don't want you to hear "death to the Jews"...Sometimes I feel that my Jewish identity is like something that someone is putting on me like clothes...and it puts limits on me.

In the face of violence and sorrow confronting her Israeli Palestinian friends, the Israeli Jewish woman suddenly felt an inability to act because of the same identity that her Israeli neighbours simultaneously claimed she had abandoned.

Being a leftist political activist in a country like Israel, another interviewee maintained, there is always a price to pay if you want to be vocal about things which are out of the national consensus. Being vocal does not make you popular among the people closest to you either:

I8: ...the question is how much you let politics be apart of your day to day life and that is something which is very important. You can be part of an organization and let's say you do two, three, four, five, ten hours of political work and then you go to your life and you do nothing there...When you're going to a restaurant and you're saying no I'm not...buying that wine that's a Golan wine and that's occupied territory...You go to the supermarket and you ask for mineral water...but you say I don't buy Eden water because that's from the occupied territories...in those terms you become very unpopular...You're not talking a person...with friends when there's intifada and you start screaming at your friends...and you keep saying look how we are doing...we're killers, we are....racist, fascist and all that and you keep on saying that all the time. Then you're not popular and you pay a price...I know a lot of people who do politics but then at work don't say a word because you have to survive I mean you still live here...

Therefore, the extent to which one wanted to pay a price for having differing opinions was always very much the result of a personal choice.

4.2 Inequality within Israel and the Conflict

Inside Bat Shalom, there were representatives of two groups that had a distinct viewpoint to the conflict based on their position of oppressed groups inside Israel: the Israeli Palestinian and the Jewish Mizrahi women. One of the main issues of dispute inside Bat Shalom has been the emphasis its activities, a dispute very much involving both the Israeli Palestinian and Mizrahi members. Moreover, the dispute has been about the organizational priorities:

I11: ...we say that we are feminist organization working on the issues of anti-occupation...and go working also on the issues of democracy within Israel...and working with Israeli Arab women is on the issues of equal rights within Israel. These are three huge

huge huge issues. How do we decide each time what is more important and what is less important. How can you separate between the issues?

This debate could also be described as one between social and political activism, and their relationship in the work of Bat Shalom. (I10; I9) The following positions taken by two Bat Shalom members during a discussion on organizational mandate highlight the different patterns of thought:

Speaker (S) 1: While there are many legitimate issues for women to be involved in, not all reflect Bat Shalom's original mission which was to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to establish and foster our relationship with the Palestinians, with an emphasis on Jerusalem... There are organizations that deal with the other issues.

S 2: I think it is important to talk about cooperation between Jews and Arabs in Israel even before we talk about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We need to work on "shlom bayit"¹⁵ first. (BSA Board 2000 Minutes 24/5/2000)

While some women in Bat Shalom maintain that the main focus of the organization should be on the work between Israelis and Palestinians of the OPT, others claimed this to be a very narrow perspective to the conflict leading to "a very cold peace between the Ashkenazi and Arabs." (I9) The Mizrahi interviewee further maintained that the issues of inequality inside Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were in fact inseparable and interlinked. She used as an example the Israeli built wall:

I9: ...the wall between Israel and Palestine, we also have walls inside Israel ... for example in Cesarea...most of the Israeli rich people are living there so they have a wall, it's not a security wall, but it's a wall that it's supposed to defend the rich people...from robberies...from the Arabic village, from the neighbours. So...when you put borders or you put walls between people it doesn't matter [if] it's between neighbours from the same country, or from the different cities or from different nations, borders and walls, this is not a solution, never.

Furthermore, she claimed, there are many common features between the situation of Mizrahi and Israeli Palestinian women, such as under-education, patriarchal family traditions, and low socio-economic standards. In addition, as the Mizrahi have their family roots in the Arabic world, these two groups share much of the same culture. But, she said, every time she tried to make this connection in Bat Shalom "there is a big resistance." (I9; See also Picture 5)

The Israeli-Palestinian members of Bat Shalom have also had to struggle with the question of equality inside the organization. Important issues for them have been for example the use of Arabic in the events of Bat Shalom and equality in the

¹⁵ Hebrew for "peace at home" or "domestic peace".



Picture 5: Wall in the Ramle/Lod area in Israel, protecting the rich neighbourhoods.

choosing of representatives for international conferences. An Israeli-Palestinian interviewee maintained that it should be equally important for Bat Shalom to target the Israeli Palestinian community as the Israeli Jewish community, and that for the organization "Arabic is not extra, Arabic should be one of the ABC." (I10). However, for example the website of Bat Shalom currently only exists in English, and the general language used in Bat Shalom board meetings has always been Hebrew which for the Israeli Palestinian is a foreign language even if most Israeli Palestinians in Israel are able to speak it.

Most of the work focusing on equality between Israeli Jewish and Israeli Palestinians is done by Bat Zafon. Out of the two bigger events, *Sukkat Shalom*, and the Land Day, organized in the North every year, *Sukkat Shalom* coincides with the Jewish feast of *Sukkot*¹⁶ and the Muslim holy month of *Ramadan*. For this event, the women set up a tent to the busy Megiddo junction in Northern Israel, and gather women to discuss political issues, and organize demonstrations. In 2005 the theme chosen was *The Occupation Is Not Over*. The Land Day, or *Yom al-Ard*, for its part commemorates the 1976 killing of six Israeli Palestinians, demonstrating against the expropriations of land in

¹⁶ *Sukkot* is a Jewish holiday as part of which a temporary tent, *sukkah*, is set up to commemorate the biblical wandering of the Jewish people in the desert for 40 years, in the aftermath of the exodus from Egypt.

Northern Israel, by the Israeli army and police. Bat Shalom Land Day event furthermore draws the connections between women, land and violence. The Land Day in 2005, held in Nazareth, included for example tours to the unrecognized villages¹⁷ in the region, and political panels and discussions. During one of the discussions, an Israeli Palestinian woman explained her complicated identity formation, growing inside Israel as a Palestinian:

I have a problem, I am Palestinian and I want to be an Israeli but most of the times I don't feel like I am an Israeli. I knew I was an Arab, not like the Jewish, but I did not know about the Palestinian nation. I started learning about the Palestinians in the territories and started realizing the killings and what the soldiers do to them...from that I have developed my Palestinian identity. Today I'm not an Israeli Arab, I am a Palestinian. It was a political tsunami for us, the change from being Israeli Arabs to Palestinians. I grew up not far from here. We spoke Hebrew but I did not know how to identify and define myself. (Field Notes 1/4/2005)

In relation to the Jewish women of Bat Shalom and the Palestinian women of OPT, the Israeli Palestinian women felt "being in the middle". They have their Palestinian identity but they are also Israeli citizens, and therefore possess a unique possibility to understand both communities. As an example, an Israeli Palestinian interviewee claimed that the Palestinian women of the JCW in practice demanded different things from the Israeli Palestinians of Bat Shalom than from its Jewish members. While the Jewish members were expected to voice clearly their condemnation of the occupation and Israeli actions in OPT, the Israeli Palestinians were expected to act as a bridge between the two communities. (I10)

At the same time, the double identity of the Israeli Palestinians has also meant having to justify ones position to both sides (I10), as for the Palestinians of the OPT the Israeli Palestinians, although fellow Palestinians, are still also part of the occupying side (I7) while in the Israeli state the Israeli Palestinians are not accepted as part of the mainstream either. For Israeli Palestinians, bringing their voice into the Jerusalem Link meetings and the joint Israeli-Palestinian work has therefore been surprisingly hard:

I10: ...a major thing is my rights within the Israeli state. Which [is] something that the Palestinians do not care about; they are in a different level of the conflict. They want to end the occupation; sure, I want to end the occupation also. But when I'm in Nazareth for sure...I care how to get more land to build houses to build a school, to have more chances that my daughter will get into the university. ...So I wanna change this...when I bring these things in the joint meetings: "What are you talking about?"

¹⁷ Unrecognised villages are Arab villages which exist inside Israel, but the Israeli authorities, because of land and resettling policies, do not wish to recognise them officially. Therefore, the villages lack in services and infrastructure. (See for example Association of Forty 2008)

The specific issues of concern to the Israeli Palestinian members of the Link thus seem to have been forgotten both by the Palestinian women of OPT and the Israeli Jewish women in face of the "true Palestinians" (I10). Furthermore, the Israeli Palestinian interviewee felt it to be artificial to only talk about ending the occupation, and not talk about the rights of the Palestinian minority inside Israel, much in the same way to her Mizrahi colleague. She compared the situation to someone refusing to speak about women's rights during conflict: "feminists say no...it's all related, it's all connected, you cannot stop thinking ...about us now till we end the occupation." (I10)

Joining an organization with Israeli Jewish members has not been self evident or obvious for the Israeli-Palestinian women either, despite their double identity:

I7: ...for me to meet Israelis, the Jewish from Israel was all the time like kind of things that I don't like because... for me there was the other cause of fear... They are threatening me by their existence, they are threatening me by their system...threatening me by their laws...and by to be majority

The Palestinian citizens of Israel were under martial law in Israel until 1966, and much of their land was confiscated from them. (Cockburn 2007, 122; Enloe 1998, 108-110) Becoming an activist in a community constantly under the threat of the Jewish majority has been challenging, especially for a woman. While some Israeli Palestinians appreciate the activists, others see them as bringing foreign Israeli ideas to the community. Many Israeli Palestinians also see activities such as the Jerusalem Link as a lost cause: there have been activities like that before but despite these activities the occupation continues and the possibilities for making peace seem slim.

The positions held by the Israeli Palestinian and Mizrahi women of the Jerusalem Link demonstrate Henriette Dahan-Kalev's claim that while the presence of the Mizrahi women is desired in the Israeli women's organizations, these women, remaining the overwhelming minority, have often been assigned the token role of being representatives of their community while their presence has enabled the organization to boast over its pluralism and democracy. Furthermore, Dahan-Kalev has maintained that while the Mizrahi are desired membership because of their ethnicity, they are usually expected to keep quiet about "the Mizrahi issue". (Dahan-Kalev 1997, 36) These claims can further be applied to the case of Israeli Palestinian women inside the Israeli peace camp. However, the reality within Bat Shalom has revealed itself to be different, as the Israeli Palestinian and Mizrahi women have faced difficulties in integrating their voice into the discussions of peace and the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

4.3 The Palestinian Women of JCW

Unlike the Israeli Jewish women of the Jerusalem Link, the Palestinian women did not have conflicts with their identities. Being a Palestinian was something that they were very proud of, and in addition to the strong feelings of belonging, the women and their families also had strong historical roots to the area. Especially for the Jerusalemite women, their families having a history of several hundreds of years in the city, Jerusalem was a big part of their identity. One of the interviewees explained that the history of her family in the city of Jerusalem could be traced back 800 years through primary references:

P3: I come from a very renowned Jerusalem family. Two members of my family were mayors of Jerusalem before '48...And... we have property in the Old City of Jerusalem. In fact to get to the roof of the Holy Sepulchre you have to go through our house to get to there. My mother's family they have the key to the Holy Sepulchre, it's a Muslim family who opens the church like the sub-church. And that was as far as... the Second Caliph who...came to Jerusalem. And you feel somebody with roots in this city in particular and now I carry only an ID that says I'm a resident, I'm not even a citizen. Which means any time I can be evicted from that city.

Despite the deep roots to the region, the history of the different periods of rule¹⁸ in the West Bank caused problems in defining one's nationality properly, especially in the absence of a Palestinian state:

P3: So, I'm a Palestinian by birth because I have a Palestinian birth certificate, because I was born before '48. I have a Jerusalem ID, but the ID says I'm, although I'm born in Palestine and I'm Palestinian, this...Israeli ID says I'm a resident. And when I travel through Israel I have to carry an Israeli travel document it says I'm not a Palestinian although it's an Israeli travel document, I'm a Jordanian it says there. Jordan was there before '67 so I carry a Jordanian passport...And the hardest thing for me was when travelling and I wanted to fill the empty card into that country and it came to nationality: what shall I write?

Q: What did you write?

P3: In certain areas like in the UK, I did not write anything so he would say "stateless".

One part of being a Palestinian under occupation have been the various restrictions and violations of rights imposed by the Israeli regime both to the individual and to the nascent Palestinian state. The Palestinian women of the JCW have all felt the Israeli occupation on a very personal level:

Zahira Kamal: ... I've been in prison for six months...[under] administrative detention which they didn't have evidence against me...The other things that is, I have for seven and a half continuing years [been under]a town arrest which means that I couldn't leave my home from sunset to one hour after sunrise and at the same time I have to report...to the police at seven in the morning and at two thirty in the afternoon and I have to go home and

¹⁸ From 1948 until 1967 the West Bank was under Jordanian rule while Gaza was under Egyptian rule.

they come at night the third time...it is at night whenever they want from sunset to the morning, sunrise. They can come to the home to see if I am at home or not. So... despite all this I decided to participate in the peace building and the dialogue with the Israelis and even that was much before the starting of the negotiations...So it is part of my belief...

For Zahira Kamal, therefore, participating in joint activities with Israeli women had been a conscious one, despite all the restrictive measures the Israeli occupation authorities had imposed on her. Some Palestinian interviewees furthermore claimed that this Palestinian experience of hardships had had a huge impact on their thinking and personal development because of the constant challenge "to go beyond the immediate" (P5), and new issues emerging every day.

For the Palestinian women, like for their Israeli counterparts, being part of the Jerusalem Link did not have altruistic motivations either. Participating to the Jerusalem Link has offered the Palestinian women one more avenue to resist the Israeli occupation, and to further the cause of the Palestinians:

P7: And for me, as a Palestinian, it is my way of resistance. I'm not doing dialogue for the sake of dialogue. I see this as a way of my non-violent resistance. I want my voice to be heard, I want my cause to be defended, I want my...women's role to be acknowledged and to be incorporated. So what I'm doing it, I'm doing it for two purposes: for the national cause and for the women's cause.

As such, this position upheld by the Palestinian women comes very close to the definition of a Palestinian P/CRO, emphasizing the strive of then Palestinian peace groups to gather support for and understanding the Palestinian cause. (Hassassian 2002, 134-135) However, while providing some of the JCW women with the motivation to participate in the Jerusalem Link, this cause of had also put limits to the Palestinian part of the Jerusalem Link and its political positions:

P9: ...and we have to have ...to be keen to the national discourse, on national standards inside Palestinians not to...discuss scenarios with Israelis about exchanging land or exchanging settlement, paying for the settlement something like this. Of course...at Palestinian community we must have a clear strategy and a clear approach, clear discourse on that issue.

In the situation of military occupation it has been very important for the Palestinian community maintain unity on the level of representation. One of the interviewees even suggested that the Jerusalem Link should change its role in order not to interfere with the realm of the Palestinian Authority and that before engaging in joint activities with the Israelis, work within the Palestinian society should be done to maintain and develop a unified discourse (P2).

However, being proud of being a Palestinian and seeing the Link as part of the Palestinian struggle did not stop some of the JCW women from having critical views on nationalism, and even to claim that they were not nationalist and did not have a national identity (P6; P5):

P5: I think it's my feminism, I'm not any more into nation, national boundaries, flags, symbols, national symbols. These things don't interest me anymore, I won't risk myself for a Palestinian flag like I saw...in the first intifada I saw many kids who were shot or put in jail just because they raise the Palestinian chant. I'm not into symbols anymore. Symbols mean nothing to me...Because I understand how symbols can be used to exploit people's emotions...I see beyond that, I look beyond that...And what is nationality, what is a nation state any more, what have the nation done to me?

Her position could on the one hand be interpreted as a criticism of the Palestinian nationalism for its ignorance of women and women's rights, but on the other hand also as a reflection of the changed realities on the ground where an independent Palestinian state no longer seems a viable possibility.

The Palestinian women of JCW have had constant inner discussions on how to deal with the presence of the Zionist nationalists in their partner organization Bat Shalom. One of the interviewees (P6) described these strategic differences in terms of a schism between a radical and a realist approach. Where the women of the realist approach wanted to deal with the Zionist women as Zionists without trying to change them, women of the more radical approach wanted to change the Zionist thinking inside Bat Shalom and saw the Jerusalem Link as a useful tool for this purpose. Even the very notion of being Zionist and at the same time secular for some Palestinian women has been confusing and contradictory: "a Zionist secular Jew... 'cause she is you know leftist so you don't understand what [is]...this mixture (laughing)." (P8)

Another difference among the JCW is the question of a two state solution to the conflict as opposed to a bi-national state composed of both Palestinians and Israelis. The two state solution is currently among the political principles of the Link, and is generally an agreed upon issue between the two sides. Given the changed facts on the ground such as the Israeli settlements and the situation in Jerusalem, some women had however increasingly begun to feel that the two-state solution was no longer a viable option, and instead one should start talking about a one bi-national state. Interviewees expressing this opinion were also critical towards nationalism as an ideology in any of its forms, and claimed that it was part of true feminist thinking to cross boundaries, nationalism, and racism. One of the interviewees explained that her changed position from two-state solution to one state was partly due to the Link itself:

P6: I had a similar mentality like them, I want to separate from them, I don't want to live with them. OK, let's separate this land and be away with them. But meeting them taught me that no, I can accept them, I can deal with these people, I ...can survive...I think we can make one nation over time...we can live together; we can make wonderful state together...

However, because of her opinions she felt marginalized and silenced within the Link by the Israeli women, as for the Zionist members the idea of a bi-national state was not something they were willing to discuss. This marginalization was expressed also in very practical terms as the woman felt that her existence was not recognized prior to the start of the meeting, and the Israeli women did not greet her or shake her hand.

Like their Israeli counterparts, many of the JCW women came from circles where political activism even with the Israeli side did not cause much criticism. According to the interviewees, the Jerusalem Link was also not well known inside the Palestinian community. However, on the whole, the criticism against joint activities has been strong especially after the beginning of the second intifada: "They are killing us and you are talking peace?" (P5) Joint activism has been interpreted as normalizing with the occupier. An especially illustrative example of this criticism was a speech by Professor Lisa Taraki from Birzeit University during the Ramallah conference on the future of the Palestinian state. In her speech, Taraki spoke very strongly against the "scary" increase of these normalization activities, projects where children were "flying kites over the wall", and dialogue groups funded by America, Europe and UNESCO. These types of activities, according to her, served more the Israeli interests, and strengthened the image of "Israel as seeking peace". Furthermore, in these activities, the Israeli occupation was not condemned, and therefore attention was diverted from the real heart of the problem. At worst, the problems of Israelis and Palestinians could only be seen as psychological instead of political: "If only Israelis and Palestinians would understand each other everything would be OK." (Field Notes 5/2/2005)

The JCW is not devoid of this criticism concerning normalization, but the interviewees of the JCW maintained that this was a misunderstanding of the nature of their work as it was just another platform for the Palestinian struggle, "political work to end occupation" (P7).

P6: I say this is political dialogue and I feel I have to change the Israeli...at least we can put our contribution in changing them, we have to talk to them with different languages...sometimes you should talk to them, and dialogue and negotiate with them, you negotiate with your enemy, you talk to your enemy, it doesn't mean that you surrender your principles...I'm responsible, I have to talk to them. I have to explain to them... they are destroying us and them.

The political nature of the Link has therefore enabled the Palestinian women to engage in joint activities with the Israelis, and offered them protection against criticism. However, defining further the nature of the work done in the Link in a right way has sometimes been tricky. As an example, one of the interviewees did not want to use the work “cooperation” on the joint work of JCW and Bat Shalom:

P9: I can't talk about cooperation. I don't like to use "cooperation". No, no it's dialogue... We are going through a dialogue process. To create understanding and trust and to bridge the gap on the expectation. So it's a process. I can't...I don't know if I will cooperate.

At the same time, there were other Palestinian interviewees that had no problem using the word cooperation – as long as it was not confused with collaboration or normalization.

5. The Process of Disagreeing and Agreeing

5.1 Revisiting the Political Agenda

The Jerusalem Link is a site for political discussions between Israeli and Palestinian women, the purpose of which is to produce a common political agenda to guide the joint work. The outcomes of these discussions are the Jerusalem Link political principles that are under constant development and reworking. This common political platform enables the women from the opposing sides of the conflict to meet and engage in joint work that otherwise would not be possible:

P7: ...most donors like those who, who can speak about peace in general and who can broaden their base of dialogue with from Peace Now to Alternative Information Center. And we say: we do not have common ground with Peace Now. It's not the politics that...we Palestinians can live with. We want people who accept 1,2,3,4. I can speak to Peace Now, but I cannot partner with Peace Now. Partnership should be based on common ground.

The principles guiding the joint work have moved from the very general and broad principles of the Brussels declaration from 1989 towards more detailed statements on what can be called the core issues of the conflict: the issue of Jerusalem, settlements, borders, and the question of refugees. For example, the early calls on self-determination of both peoples have been further augmented with a call for the establishment of a Palestinian state along the borders of June 4, 1967. The current Link principles include eleven clauses. (See Attachments 7 and 8) In addition to the principles, the Jerusalem Link also publishes joint statements on current and urgent issues. Usually one side initiates the statement, and then a joint drafting committee meets to discuss the contents and details to produce a draft. The draft produced will be under discussion of both of the boards, which suggest changes after which the statement is redrafted and reworked until it is approved by both organizations.

Revisiting the Link principles is a long and somewhat complicated process involving joint board meetings, separate board meetings, meetings of drafting committees, and also events and workshops organized for the members of the organizations to develop their thinking on the issues under discussion. Finally, it is hoped, the two organizations can reach a common position that both sides feel comfortable with:

I8:...at end of the day [there] is some kind of consensus which...is always the lowest possible denominator...you get to something agreed which is the basic thing that everybody agrees on and all the rest is left out and then everybody feels pissed off because of the rest has been left out and the next discussion...I mean you go back two steps and the next one

you go ahead three steps and then back...this is the way it's been going for ever, backwards and forwards and changing and adding this one and taking this one...

Updating the principles has also been a fervent process, and has cost especially Bat Shalom losses in membership. As an example, as the principles were updated in 1999, the then director of Bat Shalom Gila Svirsky resigned, as she no longer could agree to the new principles dealing with borders, the refugee issue, and using "all the relevant UN resolutions" as terms of reference. She felt that "[s]ome of these new principles return us to old conflicts, rather than lead us to new and creative solutions". (BSA Board 1999 Letter of Gila Svirsky to Director of JCW 31/8/1999) Discussing the most difficult questions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict therefore reveals the personal "red lines" of the Link members. For the Israeli interviewees, among other things, the question of recognition of the existence of the state of Israel in one form or another was important, while the Zionist members further emphasized the nature of Israel as Jewish state. Some also mentioned the full implementation of the right of return as a problematic issue for them. For the Palestinian women, on the other hand, the recognition of the right of return as a right and the question of Jerusalem were central.

Some of the most difficult issues under discussion have been the issues of violence and security, and phrasing them correctly in the joint statements. It has been difficult for the women to find a wording, which would be mutually acceptable. The Israeli women of the Link in general do not have a problem with condemning the Israeli violence in OPT. However, they have a problem with statements that do not mention the Israeli experience of fear and violence at all. Much in the same way as Palestinian women want to voice out the Israeli violations and the suffering of the Palestinian population, the Israeli women feel that the Israeli fear should be mentioned in the joint statements. Furthermore, the Bat Shalom women also see the mutuality in condemnation of violence necessary from a strategic viewpoint, for without it the statement will most likely be discarded by the Israeli public. In addition, an Israeli interviewee maintained that the Palestinians still had not truly realized "the impact of the terrorism on...Israeli public..." (I13), and why in that context it was difficult to mobilize people to demonstrate against the actions of the government. The concept of Israeli insecurity did in fact in the beginning surprise some of the Palestinian women:

P3: ...when Israeli used to say..."we're not secure" that was unthinkable to us. Israel has the biggest military...in the region, it can fight all the Arab countries and so on. So what is Israel talking about and this issue of security? But then when we heard from our friends that when let's say...there was a suicide bomber and...for that period you will find empty streets, the mothers will not send the children in the school bus, they have to go to send them to

school, pick them up and so on....by comparison their agony is so little compared to what the Palestinians have been through but yet at least you start understanding that on the other side also there are people with feelings and they have their own fears and you respect that.

Through listening to the other side, the women from both sides had learnt to understand better the insecurities and fears of the other side.

The Palestinian women, however, have had a problem with the condemnation of all Palestinian violence as part of the joint statements. Consistently with the remark of Yuval-Davis (1997) regarding the poor applicability of non-violence to women facing nationalist struggle, violence, not including the suicide bombings, has partly been seen as legitimate fighting against occupation:

P6: I'm not against using for example military means, I'm not necessarily against that, when you have to fight occupation it's our right. They are the oppressors, they are the occupiers, colonizers, we have to use all our means...to fight them...At the same time, this is one mean, but there should be multiple means...the only problem I have is the suicide attacks...but other military actions against...the army, against settlers, I don't mind...these people are the ones who come into, and they are coming to destroy, it's my right to defend myself whoever comes on the earth to tell me that I don't have this right, I'm sorry...

One of the Israeli interviewees also, elaborating on the question of the usage of violence as a means to struggle for freedom, admitted that she had found no real answer to the question:

I5: I find it difficult to come to a decision in this matter. On the one hand I can really understand the use of violence, why there are bombings. I don't agree with this, but I can understand where it comes from...To be realistic no change has happened without violence even in India. But on the other hand I'm a feminist woman and I'm against violence. In the end the violent fight is non-democratic fight. It has an influence on the ideals, on people, and definitely on women.

While she recognized the fact that even in India, the homeland of Gandhi, the change for freedom had not happened without violence, she found the usage of violence condemnable from her feminist point of view.

Another problematic point in the discussions around violence has been using the word "terrorism". Whereas in Israel the word terrorism has been used fairly easily to describe "[w]hatsoever...any Palestinian anywhere does to any Israeli, especially obviously the bombing" (I8), the Palestinian women of JCW are not in general comfortable with using the term terrorism at all, with respect to their own constituencies. However, women have occasionally been able to reach a consensus in statements on for example condemning "violence against civilians" (I13). The reluctance of JCW to strongly condemn Palestinian violence against Israeli civilians has been deeply disappointing for

some of the Bat Shalom women. In addition, even in statements including condemnation of violence by both sides, the question of how to balance between these two parts has been a question to be argued. One of the Israeli interviewees found this "balancing of sufferings" not useful as:

I7: ...you [are] still playing the game...because you still [are]...answering the mainstreams because you still play the game of who's making the balance. And you still play the game of react and reaction. And I don't think that it's an alternative thing that we are bringing...

According to her, this fighting over suffering, playing the game of "react and reaction" was just replicating the mainstream discussions. Instead she suggested that the focus should be on speaking of the occupation and condemning the occupation which by itself was a term, and the source of the mutual suffering.

Many of the Palestinian interviewees tended to see the Palestinian violence as directly related to the Israeli occupation, the increasing restrictions, and the lack of hope for better future for the Palestinian people. Especially during the worst incursions of the Second Intifada a Palestinian interviewee described the central feeling among the Palestinian population as "let them hurt like we are hurting" (P5). The Palestinian women criticized what they perceived as the Israeli concept of security meaning: "only way for us is to achieve peace is by security. Security builds peace. Not peace brings security." (P6) Instead, some of the Palestinian women spoke in terms of "mutual human security" (P5):

Zahira Kamal: Is security it is the security of Israel? And because of the security of Israel, we have to be punished as a people all the time? Or it is, you cannot live in security while I'm not living that. Yani, you cannot be secure if I am insecure. So, security is a mutual issue that we have to enjoy both, as it cannot be done for one side and leaving the other in danger. So, how to think about it.

According to these interviewees security should be a concept encompassing the security of both sides to the conflict. Without it, no side would eventually be secure.

In the process of discussing joint statements, activities, and the principles of the Link, both Israeli and Palestinian women have felt to an extent being used by the other side. In the face of heavy violence inflicted on the Palestinians, a Palestinian woman "felt that the Israeli women use us to ...beautify the Israeli face in the public...in relation ...in the global, in general." (P9) The Israeli women of Bat Shalom on the other hand have had the feeling that the Palestinian women continuously demand things from them, are never satisfied with the work of Bat Shalom, and want them "to

agree to every one of their demands” (I2). One of the Israeli Jewish interviewees described the situation in terms of a feeling of “always being tested...as if they were waiting to see our performance...in terms of trusting us: can they trust us.” (I13)

For the Palestinian participants of the Link, the process of discussing issues that for them are “a matter of life and death” (P9) over and over again has been emotionally hard, eroding their trust to the Israeli partner:

P8: And sometimes we feel no that, it's not going to work because even if those people whom we know very well, who are the leftists, who are women, intelligent...academics, intellectuals and do not accept certain...issues which are most critical for us then you know... of course we don't mind of Sharon is not accepting. So sometimes it's disappointing...

Many of the Palestinian interviewees have been disappointed in the ability of their Israeli partners to tackle issues that are of the uttermost importance for the Palestinians, such as the right of return, and also the ability of the Israeli women to rise above the nationalist dogmas of Zionism. As a result of the second intifada one Palestinian interviewee concluded: “you can't trust them [the Link] in the serious problems” (P1). Therefore, the issue of trust has always been a contested one, and requires constant attention. While some basic level of trust, especially between women that have been involved in the Link from the start, has been achieved, there has never existed a one hundred percent trust, and in face of renewed violence and developments in the conflict, trust needs to be constantly rebuild and worked on.

In general, the women on both sides seemed to be very well aware of the expectations and disappointments of the other side. The Israelis for example knew well that the women of JCW had expected them to work harder to reach the Israeli public, and that in the eyes of the Palestinians they had failed. The Israelis on the other hand had expected from JCW more in terms of partnership, engagement in joint activities, and willingness to compromise and reach agreement on the issues discussed. A feature common for both sides was the feeling of wanting to be understood and accepted by the other side. However, the situation on the ground being especially hard for the Palestinian, some Israeli women felt that it was not politically correct to expect anything at all from the Palestinian side for the moment.

Despite the complexity of the process of agreeing and disagreeing that the women go through, many also appreciated the experience gained through the continuous discussions: In addition to the disappointments, the dialogue had also offered the women other kinds of experiences, “[s]ometimes a lot of agreement, sometimes to the extent that you feel you have really found the solution for the conflict and we have

made peace.” (P11). Another Palestinian woman highlighted the importance of the presence of emotions in the Link discussions:

P3: Peace is not just a peace of paper and signing it, written agreement. It's peace among the peoples. And because they're people they're with emotions I mean it's very important that these people go through a certain process you know the same process that we went through within the Jerusalem Link. These people need to meet with each other, shout at each other and then learn how to communicate and understand the fears of the other.

She saw the expression of negative feelings and the process that had followed, as a starting point for increasing understanding that was necessary not only for women of the Link but to people of both societies in general.

The Jerusalem Link on the whole was seen by many interviewees as a process through which women had gained political maturity and self-confidence, and their discourse on political issues and argumentation had also gone through important developments. This process-like feature of political work was valued:

P7: ...I cannot claim that we have an ideal situation, but we try to...develop different model. We try to work on issue of trust. We try to find common objectives and to address issues with a common message. We understand what we disagree on but at the same time we base what we agree on. And what we disagree on, we do not just throw away, we insist to we keep discussing and discussing until we find a solution. So you have to persistent you have to be committed you have to be stubborn.

As such, the form of dialoguing comes very close to the ideas of a transversal mode of dialogue: women of different rootings gathering around the same goals and values, while maintaining their different points of departure. (Yuval-Davis 1997, 130-131)

Most, if not all of the interviewees had been involved in other Israeli Palestinian frameworks, and had connections to the opposing side even before their involvement in the Link. Therefore, it was difficult for them to separate what they had learned specifically through the Link. In terms of political ideas, the Link had not changed much in the thinking of the women of either side, as they had had their ideals before joining the Link, and perhaps because of precisely them became active in it. If anything, the Link had made their ideals stronger and clearer. However, women from both sides did bring up the fact that personal contact and discussions increased understanding of the other and their way of thinking about issues, and also humanised the other. Through the Link women had also gained additional contacts to the other side, and also contacts to the international community. The Israeli interviewees also appreciated the fact that through their partners they were more informed about what was going on in OPT. One

of the Israelis also highlighted the eye-opening effects of personal contacts, even on an already vowed peace activist:

I13: I found from the early dialogue...extraordinary, it was the first time I'd really been involved in dialogue and I hadn't really believed in dialogue before...But I changed completely...I found that even though I had been...active...And that meant I'd demonstrated in the West Bank any number of times, I'd demonstrated above against the settlements...I'd been...as active as you can be in the peace movement but I hadn't really ever met Palestinians and sat down and talked with Palestinians who were educated, and similar backgrounds in the sense of having higher educating, working with these professionals. And in this dialogue for the first time I met women like this, women like myself... having coffee with them after a meeting or something, and hearing things, it made an enormous difference. It was just no comparison in terms of an understanding what it was like to live under occupation what was going on. And it isn't as if these weren't things I had heard before. But to sit down and talk to somebody and to see a real live human being behind these things made an enormous difference and I became very much a supporter of dialogue.

Knowing people who were directly affected by the occupation had made a difference in a way pure knowledge could not.

5.2 Discussing the Right of Return

The Jerusalem Link principle currently under discussion and revision is the principle number 6 concerning the right of return of the Palestinian refugees. The right of return refers to the UN general assembly resolution 194¹⁹ from December 1948, ensuring the refugees of 1948 the return to their homes. While in the 1947-48 fighting surrounding the establishing of the state of Israel an estimated 500-750 000 Palestinians became refugees, the number of refugees has today increased to 4,4, million Palestinians with an UNRWA recognized refugee status. (UNRWA 2008) As the issue of the right of return is connected to the questions of Zionism, the nature of the state of Israel, and also the interpretation of history, it has been hard for the women of JCW and Bat Shalom to find a common standing on the matter.

While the Link principles from 1996 did not include a clause on the right of return, the principles ratified in 1999 stated:

6. A just solution to the Palestinian refugee question is an essential requirement for a stable and durable peace. This solution must honor the right of return of the Palestinian refugees in accordance with UN resolution 194. (BSA JL Decl. Declaration 18/8/1999)

¹⁹The UN General Assembly Resolution 194 states concerning the refugees that the General Assembly “[r]esolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss or damage of property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments and authorities responsible.” (UNGA 1948)

However, while originally ratified by both sides, Bat Shalom soon discovered this position to be too radical for both most of its board members, let alone the Israeli public. Therefore, the Israeli side refrained from publicising the 1999 principles and started to work on the principle again. (BSA JCW Memo on meeting between directors 13/9/2000; BSA Board 2001 Message from Board of JCW to BS Board.) The results of this reworking are the 2001 principles of the Link that incorporate two different clauses on the right of return:

6. Palestinian: Israel accepts its moral, legal, political and economic responsibility for the plight of Palestinian refugees and thus must accept the right of return according to relevant UN resolutions.

Israeli: Israel's recognition of its responsibility in the creation of the Palestinian refugees in 1948 is a pre-requisite to finding a just and lasting resolution of the refugee problem in accordance with relevant UN resolutions.

As a result of the difference, the website of JCW currently posts the 1999 principles (Attachment 7) and Bat Shalom website the 2001 principles (Attachment 8). The women have been trying to phrase a common standing on the issue, but have not managed so far to find a mutually acceptable formulation, although the two standpoints of the 2001 principles seem to be, at least at a first glance, very close to each other. The existing disagreements focus mainly on the amount of responsibility of Israel for the events of 1948, the position of the UN resolution 194, and the discussion between right of return as a right on the one hand, and the ways of exercising the right in the other.

For the Palestinian women, the right of return is part of their national and political agenda, and therefore “right of return as a right”, guaranteed to the Palestinian refugees by international law, has been seen as inalienable. Some Palestinian women noted that the modalities of exercising that right could further be negotiated, but at the same time maintained that in the end, it was the refugees themselves that had the last say whether they wanted to return to their land, to the Palestinian state, or to be compensated for their loss. The Palestinians also saw it as important that Israel would recognise its full responsibility for the *naqba*²⁰, and therefore its responsibility of creating the refugee question in the first place:

P9: I cannot accept the Israeli logic of feeling...not responsible for the Palestinian...naqba...in '48. Which they deny, they say: we accept our part of responsibility. Because they think...we are also responsible, the Arab world is responsible, the whole

²⁰ *Naqba* is an Arabic word meaning catastrophe, and is used by the Palestinians to describe the events of 1948 and the creation of the refugee problem.

world...No! They are solely responsible for that, if they don't recognize then we will continue to have problem.

The Palestinian interviewees also wondered questions such as why were Israelis willing to accept the UN resolution that established Israel, but were instead unwilling to accept the right of return (Zahira Kamal), and the contradiction between the Israeli law of return and the unwillingness to respect the Palestinian right of return:

P9: If the Israeli, the Jews have a right of return to Israel, we also need to have our right of return for people who were, are living here now. Not 1000, 3000 years ago who were living here, like 50 years ago, they are still waiting, they are holding the keys.

The Israeli law of return from 1950 currently assures all Jews the right to immigrate to Israel. (State of Israel 1950) Another Palestinian interviewee connected the question to the Zionist education, according to which Palestine had been "land with no people for people without a land":

P5: ...this is how they think of us. This is in the deepest...they think that...we are a problem they have to deal with...because we happen to come on their historically rightful place that they have their right to claim. For me, I cannot accept this. You know history doesn't stop with the destruction of the Second Temple...We are not a problem to be dealt with, managed, the Palestinian people is not a problem to be managed. The Palestinian people are a people to be dealt with total sensitivity, with total recognition of historical rights...

According to this woman, the perception Zionist Israelis had on the Palestinians was directly linked to the way they dealt with the Palestinians. Therefore, she wanted to stress the strong historical rights to the land of the Palestinian people, and at the same time emphasized that in a similar way she hoped the Palestinians to be thought of, she also thought of the Israeli women, and that it would be her "downfall" if she would start seeing the Israelis as a problem to be managed.

Some Palestinian women were of the opinion that in relation to 1948 and the nature of the state of Israel, they had to carry on their shoulders the historical fears of their Israeli counterparts, based on the history of persecution of the Jews in Europe, and the holocaust:

P6: What the Israelis are doing, and that was one of my major problems with them, they every time we set to dialogue, they come up with their history in Europe. They try to move and it's so, so cruel, to try to move the responsibility of those who oppressed them in Europe and put it on our shoulders. I cannot take this responsibility. It's beyond my...it's not part of my history; it's not me who did it...

P5: The whole issue of how do you deal with the grievances of 1948 and that is still label with a lot of emotion and difficulties and...many women are afraid, they have to deal with their fears and whether their fears are...related to really Israel-Palestine or related to their

historical fears of Jews and the anti-Semitism and holocaust ...but the fact is on the ground now you have 3 million refugees who need justice...I mean, you have to deal with that, that's a reality they have to confront, now, their own insecurities as Jews due to Europe and anti-Semitism, you have to go back to Europe and deal with that in Europe not with us. You know, take it back to Europe, this is my opinion. I say that to them, it's hard for them to hear it.

While many women expressed their sympathy and compassion over the history of holocaust, they also maintained that the Palestinians should not have to face blame for it, and that it was not a justification for destroying yet another nation. In the current situation, the Jewish were no longer the victims, but they had become the occupiers of another nation.

Among the Palestinian interviewees, there were women whose families lost property and had to flee in 1948. A woman, who had herself become a refugee in 1948, spoke during the interview of a big house her family had owned in the Qatamon area of Jerusalem, which is now part of the Jewish West Jerusalem. For her, relinquishing the memory of her family history was impossible, and she had been deeply disappointed with her Israeli Jewish colleague from Bat Shalom who had not been able to express sympathy for this part of her life history:

P10: One of my partners, the one I went together to Spain with...we had to work...on the brochure. And at that time I could go to Jerusalem...And this was in West Jerusalem very near to our house...And when I reach I said "Y...do you know... our house in West Jerusalem is just far away from me, is just to walking distance?"...she did not respond. I thought that she would be kind enough and tell me: "X let us walk together towards that house and let me see it." She...did not utter a word...That evening I felt so bad. I said a lady who believed in our center that Palestinian women and Israeli women working together towards peace and she did not respond positively to my statement! I was deeply hurt.

Because of this event, the woman started seriously to doubt the sincerity of her Israeli partners. Another Palestinian interviewee described also the difficulties she had had to face, dealing with her family history from 1948:

My father had a beautiful house in West Jerusalem and every two-three months I go and visit...of course it was complicated in 1948 I spent many, many years before my father died to ask him "Father, did you run away or did they put you out of the house, did you run away?" And even I'm today I'm telling myself even if he run away because he was afraid of the Irgun and of the massacres that were taking place at that time: it's so human to run away, why should I be upset with my father?...this house, five years ago was sold...for three million dollars...I went all around the lawyers, Israeli, Palestinian-Israeli, Arab lawyers...Jewish lawyers and Palestinian, all the lawyers that I could find here, and I told them how could I get back my fathers house?...And all the lawyers told me you cannot do that except by buying it...and some Israeli friends told me if you find the money we can buy it because of course they won't sell to Palestinians...

In the end, the woman was not able to raise enough funds to buy back her father's house. The same woman has also been involved in the Nusseibah-Ayalon People's Campaign, an initiative according to which principles the Palestinian refugees would have the right of return only to the Palestinian state. She related that having this conviction had raised a lot of opposition in the Palestinian community, her colleagues in the JCW, and that also some radical Israelis had criticized her. She however justified her position by saying that this is what she personally believed to a more feasible solution which in the long run would help the two nations to live together.

Where in the end the Palestinian women all and all were rather unified in their answers concerning the right of return, the Israeli women had differing opinions. While some were more willing to accept the right of return, for many accepting the full exercise of the right was problematic whether because it was thought unrealistic or because it would change the demographic balance of the state of Israel and change its nature as a Jewish state, thus equalling a "national suicide". (BS JW Isr-Pal Minutes of Palestinian-Israeli Women Meeting 14/6/2001). A Zionist Israeli interviewee clarified her position on the right of return in the following way:

I6: First of all I say that...Israel should recognise its part...in creating the Palestinian refugee problem ...Because I...strongly believe that we don't have to take upon us all of the blame. The Palestinians has a blame...the...other Arab nations are to be blamed, the Palestinian leadership is a lot to be blamed and yes Israel has a part too but only a part and we're not the sole responsible...I'm willing to recognise my part and...not more than that....And then I'm saying that yes the right of return is a right and no one can deny it...but...the way you're going to exercise it will be dealt...on the negotiation table...Myself...I fail to see the logic how Palestinians who are striving for independence for so many years would like to come and live in an Israeli state if they have a choice to live in a Palestinian state....unless you have an evil thought and you think that let's go by our millions and we'll overtake the state and make it yet another Palestinian state...So...most Israelis will say that there isn't such a thing as the right of return I'm willing to acknowledge the right like the same way that I feel that I have a right to live in Nablus. But I'm not going to live there, I have a right, I'm not going to exercise it. One has to know their limitation...of power, of possibilities.

The woman clearly believed that the responsibility for 1948 belonged also to other parties to the conflict in addition to Israel. While admitting to the right of return as a right, she simultaneously drew a comparison between it and her own historical rights as a Jew to live in the West Bank – a right which she did not intend to exercise.

Bat Shalom interviewees mentioned the fact that refining the principle concerning the right of return in the aftermath of 1999 had been a long process for them, but that in the end they managed to educate themselves on the matter. The Israeli women felt that they had taken a long step a head in the process, and were disappointed when JCW did not accept their new formulation:

I9: ...we had our position and it was very different from the first position that we have and we just gave them our position...and they didn't like it. Although...we really moved from the point...that we were two years ago...but the feeling was that...they are not...they don't have the will to move even centimetre from the point they are standing and they want us to get to this point...

Another Israeli interviewee further asserted that it was harder to reach compromise on these issues with their Palestinian women partners than it was with the Palestinian men, relating this to the fact that perhaps women were more vulnerable to criticism in Palestinian society. For the part of JCW, the clarity of its Israeli partner in central issues of Palestinian struggle such as the right of return was of uttermost importance, as the crisis on the right of return coincided with the beginning of the second intifada. (BS JW Isr-Pal Minutes of Palestinian-Israeli Women Meeting 14/6/2001)

5.3 Occupier Meeting the Occupied and the Second Intifada

The occupier-occupied dimension is an ever present under current in the work of the Link. The situation of military occupation, and the fact that the women represent two different sides to the conflict, occupier and the occupied, is the source of much of the problems of the Link, affecting the feeling of trust. This basic inequality was recognized as a problem by all of the interviewees. The situation of the military occupation of the Palestinian territories *per se* positions the women differently, making it difficult to feel equal despite good intentions on both sides. A Palestinian interviewee, when asked if she felt equal to the Israeli women of the Link, answered without hesitation:

P9: No, never, never. Of course this. Never. If I go to a meeting in Jerusalem I have a long and a very hard journey and I put myself in big risk: I haven't permission...If I agree to go to have permission, I go through a long process of humiliation, to stand for hours in the queue...my life is in danger, I can be captured at any time by the police in Jerusalemhow can we become...equal? They drive to the meeting even if we have the same agenda in that meeting...she drives from Haifa or Tel Aviv by her car, I have to go through many ways to avoid the wall and avoid the checkpoint...I reach the meeting...in a psychological way which...put me under pressure and I can see and feel that we are not equal, on the personal level.

This woman belonged to those JCW members who resided outside East Jerusalem, and therefore for entering Jerusalem would have needed to obtain a permit from the Israeli authorities. She however refused to go through that humiliating process, and instead detoured the Israeli checkpoints, risking being caught and arrested. Her example demonstrates very clearly how already regarding mere issues of mobility Israeli and Palestinian women are unequal.

According to the Palestinian interviewees, the occupier mentality of the Israelis manifested itself in the practical joint work in various ways: in the manner of

speaking to their partners, in the body language, and also in the patronizing attitude towards their partners: "...like here we're doing peace work, we're talking to you and you are ungrateful". (P5) Zahira Kamal described the manifestation of the mentality during the early years of the Link in the following way:

...of course it is the occupier usually cannot think about the occupied people as equal...when we start our relation it is like "OK, you Palestinians have to do this and that, and you must" and all this. So it was like orders that they are giving, it's like...they are our teachers.

The issue of power asymmetry has been discussed by the Link members, but the results of these discussions have not been very clear-cut: "Sometimes it helps; sometimes it makes things more complicated." (P9) In the following, the directors of both Bat Shalom and JCW discuss their feelings after a disagreement concerning the repeated cancellations of a joint meeting by the JCW which in turn had upsetted the Israeli director very much:

I want to apologize for overreacting on the phone on Friday, and for loosing my temper. I was so hurt by you that I could not hold myself anymore. I want to explain why, and I hope we can have a sincere and frank discussion which would allow us to continue our work together. I need your help for stepping out of this pattern of relationship in which you dictate and I accept, in which I am not supposed to ask any questions because I am the occupier. (BSA JL 1995 Letter from Director of BS to Director of JCW 5/2/1995)

Thank you for your fax of February 5th which gave me some relief after all pain I've passed through since last Friday. I highly respect your frankness and I'll be sincere with you as I've always been. It was very offensive to be treated in such a patronizing manner which unfortunately brought to my mind the "occupiers' stereotype". (BSA JL 1995 Letter from Director of JCW to Director of BS 7/2/1995)

Both women felt being treated unfairly, using the occupier-occupied –dimension as an explanatory factor for their angerment. The case exemplifies the fact that both sides feel the tension arising from the power asymmetry, and how this asymmetry becomes embedded in the practical details of the joint work. This basic asymmetry furthermore seems to become reproduced in the interpretations of women every time there are difficulties in the joint work.

Many of the Israeli interviewees did give recognition to the fact that they were in a better position and, as occupiers, always "having the upper hand" (I6). The awareness of this basic asymmetry in turn affected the way the Israeli women behaved towards their Palestinian partners:

I13: It makes you try not to be patronizing ...not to assume that...not to assume anything really. And to try to operate as if we as we are totally equal. Not in the negative sense of ignoring what they're going through but in the other sense of saying that these are people ex-

actly the same social status political status...I have the sense that it's important to not let that [power asymmetry] come into the picture, to sit back and to listen, not dominate, not dominate the conversation, not try to tell people what to do, hold back in a way that I wouldn't hold back necessarily in a group of Israelis. Because it is a difference in the power situation even if you don't wanna be part of that or don't feel that you're part of it.

The woman thus tried to consciously avoid letting the power asymmetry influence the joint work. Another Israeli interviewee also maintained that the asymmetrical relationship caused her in the end to give up "more than I would like to" (I6). Furthermore, an Israeli woman related, the position of an occupier had sometimes put her to the uncomfortable position of "a charity worker" (I12), because she, with the right connections, could influence for example for a Palestinian getting a pass. At the same time, this Israeli Jewish interviewee maintained that not all Israeli women had internalized the awareness of being an occupier:

I12: Israelis really do not understand that just because they are liberal and want to see an end to occupation that they are, none the less they are part of the occupying power and the relationship with power between the two sides is unequal...

She maintained that the struggle towards equality was one of the most important questions precisely because it was so difficult for some of the Israelis to comprehend.

At the same time, some of the Israeli women felt somewhat annoyed by the accusations. One of the Israeli interviewees as an example felt that patronizing was sometimes used as "an easy out" (I1) from the problems occurring in joint work, even when it was not a question of asymmetry. Another interviewee felt that the Israelis, because they happened to be the occupiers, had to unnecessarily "tiptoe all the time" and be "very sensitive to every Palestinian sensitivity about things" (I3). This attitude "Oh poor Palestinians, we cannot be angry at them..." (I5) was in fact, according to yet another Israeli interviewee, just another form of a colonial attitude. Being blamed for the actions of the Israeli government was, however, difficult for some of the Israeli women to handle:

I3: ...I don't like the idea that I have to apologize for the...for the mere fact that I'm alive. And I'm not representative of the Israeli government. I'm representative of peace movement...I don't think that I should be blamed for all what Sharon is doing. I don't have to apologize...all the time.

During the cooperation, women from both sides have had to carry on their shoulders the defects of their governments and societies, whether or not they felt responsible for them.

The beginning of the second intifada in September 2000 appears to have caused a mutual shock for both organizations of the Link and their members. Part of the problems had to do with physical obstacles to meet, as obtaining permits to enter Jerusalem became harder for the Palestinian board members outside the Jerusalem area, and for the Israeli women entering OPT also became risky as Israeli citizens were forbidden to enter Palestinian territories. With the increasing movement restrictions, the wall and the checkpoints, joint meetings and joint activities became increasingly difficult, if not impossible. At the same time, the Palestinian women also felt they had “other priorities” (P8) which surpassed talking to the Israeli women, such as working on the situation in Jenin²¹ and coordinating together with other Palestinian NGOs the response to the destruction.

The other problems had to do with the shock of the amount of violence that each side of the conflict experienced. The Israeli women were shocked by the actions of their government, and did not know exactly how to deal with the situation:

I13: ...for months I found it very hard to talk with my Palestinian friends, I didn't know what to say. I was basically ashamed. So the best I could do would be emails, God forbid telephone calls. And I just said very frankly in emails to two or three people, I just don't know what to say.

The Israeli woman felt too ashamed to contact her Palestinian partners directly. However, at the same time for the Palestinian side of the Link, this quietness of their Israeli partners was hurtful as they felt the violence personally and concretely:

P7: And for two months there's they were in total silence, they didn't even talk to us at times when Ramallah was shelled with missiles or when Gaza was attacked by F16 and F15, and apache. And we were totally shocked by the fact that our partners for peace have not even called us, say “How are you, are you still alive?”.

Furthermore, the Palestinian women were disappointed with what they perceived as the inability of the Israeli women to react strongly enough to the beginning of the second intifada. When Bat Shalom then, after the brutal killing of two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah in October 2000, issued a statement, the reactions from the Palestinian side were strong:

When today I found the first press release from Bat Shalom, I felt eased and intended to forward it to as many addresses I could. After reading it, I hesitated, and decided to reflect on it in an attempt to initiate dialogue. Opening with the lynching of the two Israeli soldiers,

²¹ In the spring of 2002 the Israeli army invaded the city of Jenin in the West Bank, targeting especially its refugee camp.

you establish your priority of concern and the necessity to respond. This inflames emotions on our sides. Why did you wait with your press release until Israelis were killed? I, who know you well, and appreciate your work and attitudes can imagine that you were upset and did not know what to do. But those who do not know you and do not believe in the joint work for peace will never forgive you. (BSA JCW file Open letter to all in Bat Shalom 14/10/2000 by Director of JCW)

From the Palestinian perspective, the Israelis had only become engaged when the violence touched the Israelis. Eventually, JCW followed in line with other Palestinian NGOs in responding to the call of the PNGO network to halt all joint projects with Israeli NGOs, especially people-to-people kinds of projects or programs with an approach of normalization, because of the massive violence of the second intifada. (IPCRI 2002, 79-80) Via a statement from the JCW board, dated October 22, 2000, the JCW froze its joint activities with Bat Shalom:

The Jerusalem Center for women can find no excuse for the absence of the Israeli left, the Israeli peace camp, during this time...The Jerusalem Center for Women refuses any kind of coordination, joint programming and activities that is characteristic to normalization as long as we live in an a-normal life: Israel is the occupier and Palestine the occupied, we want to be free and independent and they want to control our land, our people and our future. (BSA JCW file JCW Board of Directors Statement 22/10/2000)

The statement clearly reflected the disappointment of the Palestinian women to the silence of Bat Shalom in particular and the Israeli peace movement in general. However, the beginning of the second intifada did not break up all contacts between the women of the Jerusalem Link, and while the formal meetings of the boards did not take place, some of the women met individually. Eventually, JCW decided to continue its relations with Bat Shalom.

P4: Then we decided on the contrary, the voices of women should be heard. Especially in these, under these conditions where...there are systematic attempts...to bring the two sides not to speak to each other. I mean, what was happening it was benefiting the right on the Israeli side...And we want the Israeli society to hear our voices that...there is a Palestinian partner, there are Palestinians who believe in what we've been struggling for the end of occupation...and having to states next to each other.

The Intifada also radicalized both of the organizations. Where the Palestinian JCW was demanding more and more of the hard issues to be discussed, also Bat Shalom's positions changed for more radical ones. As a result, Bat Shalom membership changed as less radical women backed away, making the organizations very far away from the general public in Israel. Bat Shalom, according to an interviewee, also became more interdependent of the other peace organizations. (I1) Another interviewee related that it also

became more difficult to have mutual statements in a situation where both sides were experiencing violence, but simultaneously there was a huge asymmetry between them:

I13: ...it just became so bad you couldn't talk, it made it very difficult to talk in terms of both sides...Difficult in those circumstances to say "well you've got to say something about the Israeli side", because there isn't any symmetry in what's going on, on the other hand, it was impossible to ignore terrorism, you can't just sit there and ignore what the Israeli side is feeling.

The Israeli interviewee furthermore felt that the Israeli side had given in so much on the matter of the principles and statements that the possibility of reaching the general public in Israel with them was already impossible and that she had already given up trying. Another interviewee also confirmed the fact that Bat Shalom had come far off its constituencies:

I8:...Bat Shalom has been left there with a very, very, very radical position and so we don't represent Israeli society we represent maybe the nicest best a bleeding heart aware political whatever kind of Israeli society but we don't represent the Israeli society, no.

With the beginning of the second intifada, the Israeli general public had moved towards the right, leaving organizations such as Bat Shalom, previously representing positions of central left, to the radical left.

Regarding the relationship between women of the Link, women had differing opinions. While some had developed friendship-like relationships with their counterparts from the other side, others felt that there were little or no real relations. One of the interviewees as an example saw the quietness surrounding the beginning of the second intifada as a symptom of the weaknesses of the process the Israeli and Palestinian women had had together: the connections had not been so much personal on a personal level as on political and working levels. (I12). Other Israeli interviewees also claimed that if the relationship had been more on a personal level in addition to the political level, then "there'd be...a meaning" (I4) to the Link, and "[t]hen maybe we could get beyond the occupier-occupied" (I4). For the Palestinian women, on the other hand, the social relationships have not been a possibility or a priority precisely because of the political situation on the ground, the Israeli occupation. (Farhat-Naser 2003, 63-65)

This question of the personal relationships as a "tool for remembering the humanity" (I4) had also been an issue inside the Link, as the Israeli women have tended to want more contact on the social level than the Palestinian women. Former Bat Shalom director Gila Svirskey has described this difference by saying that Israeli women

want dialogue so that they can sleep better at night, while the Palestinian women want to prevent the Israeli women to sleep well at night:

The dialogue work is always marked by the determination of the Palestinian side to get to the political issues, to talk about what Israel is doing wrong...Whereas the Israeli women come because they want to be friends with the Palestinian women. They want to drink coffee, they want to talk about their children and about good books they've read. They acknowledge the faults of the Israeli government but, at the same time, they want to get past it. But the Palestinians are not past it.

For the Palestinian women establishing relations to their Israeli partners outside the political work would have equalled normalizing relations in an abnormal situation, and therefore they were more cautious in terms of what kind of activities they could engage themselves in. Former director of JCW Sumayya Farhat-Naser elaborated in her letter to former Bat Shalom director Dafna Golan why she could not call her as her friend, despite working together with her:

But as long as our relationship and our sphere of joint work is official and political; as long as an enormous asymmetry continues to exist between our peoples, one being 'occupier' and the other 'occupied' – it remains unacceptable to address you as 'friend'. Why is that? Because you hold a position in the machinery of the political system that oppresses my people...Our problem is not that we don't drink coffee or eat lunch together! Rather, our problem is political: how can Palestinian and Israeli women find the way to learn from one another, to be able to listen and search together for solutions while there is still an occupation? (Farhat-Naser 2003, 63, 66)

Some of the Israeli women had been very disappointed with what they felt as the reluctance of the Palestinian women to meet and engage in joint activities. For one of the Israeli interviewees this Palestinian carefulness to do joint work had been interpreted as a sign of lacking independence, and JCW "expressing the wishes of the Palestinian Authority and not necessarily have the eyes on the commonality of our struggle." Also, it has been difficult for many of the Israeli women to understand the persistence of the Palestinian women to maintain the relationship on a political level:

I3: I was with Y in Italy and I said hey let's meet ...come over to my place and...a dinner...like next week and she said I'm not going to houses. I said OK so let's meet in a café and have a drink. She said I'm not going to Western Jerusalem...

This woman was not also very deeply involved in the Link, because she was frustrated with disputes over formulations.

The nature of the relationship between individual women from the Link in the end seemed to depend very much on the person, as becomes evident from the following statement by a Palestinian interviewee:

P3: ...as a concept of course and with all the atrocities, all injustices and so on... there still remains that feeling of bitterness as a result of injustice, unfairness, discrimination, and so on. All this double standard. But then in reality whenever I see any of...these friends, I don't bear any grudge against them. You see, I mean they're my friends, I forget that maybe directly or indirectly they've been a party to all the injustices inflicted on us. So, it's a very strange feeling these paradoxes we live in.

This Palestinian interviewee, unlike some other Palestinian women, had no problem referring to the Israeli women of the Jerusalem Link as "friends". However, she also emphasized in her statement the obvious paradoxes of these relationships: the constant balancing between the developments in the conflict and the personal relationships some of the women had managed to develop during the years.

6. Feminist Activism for Peace?

6.1 Activism for Peace and Beyond

The Jerusalem Link women are very often labelled as peace activists by their international audiences. However, when asked, many of the interviewees found using the words "peace" and "peace activist" as problematic because, in their opinion, the word peace had become abused, a "Bush going to fight for peace and freedom kind of thing" (I8). Therefore some of the women rather spoke of themselves in other terms, for example as "an activist against the occupation, not for peace" (I8). Furthermore, speaking in terms of peace was seen by one of the Israeli interviewees as a way to avoid speaking about the real issues, namely the occupation.

Q: Why not peace activist?

I5: I hate that word...I hate that, never that! Never that... "Peace". I don't want to shut up... I want to put the hard issues on the table and we need to work on them.

She felt that by speaking about peace instead of occupation, the Israeli peace groups had made a huge error, as this discourse allowed the Israeli public to think that Israel was in fact making peace, and it was hard for the general public then to understand why the Palestinians still were engaged in intifadas and violent attacks.

Also the objective situation on the ground makes it very hard to speak about peace, especially for the Palestinian women and especially since the beginning of the second intifada. Some women stated that they believed in peace "but which kind of peace in this situation?" (P2) The following extracts from Amal Khreishe's poem-like speech, held already in 1994 when the Oslo process was still underway, illustrate very well the problematics attached to the word "peace" in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

Peace. Everyone nowadays is talking about peace; the same peace that for us, Palestinians, was first a dream, then a hope, now a nightmare.

What does it mean this peace for 180,000 workers and their families who are deprived of their basic source of living because of the political closure that forbids them to work inside Israel?

What does it mean this peace for those farmers whose lands are confiscated by the Israeli occupation authority?

What does it mean this peace for thousands of students who cannot reach their colleges and universities because of the closure?

What does it mean this peace for those who are still killed, arrested, whose rights are daily violated by an always present military control?

At the end a question comes to my mind: Is it our fate to stand on top of a mountain of youth bodies, clapping hands for peace? (BSA JL 1994 Amal Khreishe 29/12/1994)

While highlighting the difficulty to speak about peace in the middle of active military occupation, the speech also demonstrates that the issues that are problematic today, such as movement limitations, land confiscations and killings, were key issues already over ten years ago. The situation on the ground has therefore not changed for the better for the Palestinians, as a Palestinian interviewee noted: "I don't see anything getting better, I see it getting worse." (P10)

For some of the Israeli interviewees it was yet important to emphasize the distinction between solidarity activism and activism for peace. One of the Israeli interviewee highlighted the difference between peace activism and solidarity as a difference between mutuality and expressing support to only one side as for example the International Solidarity Movement was doing:

I13: So from my point of view when I talk about it, with regard to Bat Shalom, what I mean is that basically what we're an organization that came together to try to push the peace process, to end the conflict, to reach a peace agreement of some kind...which means that... you don't just look at one side of it, that it is not just a question of protecting Palestinian rights or trying to promote Palestinian rights. There, there's another side to it as well. It doesn't mean necessarily symmetry or equality and so forth but there is that difference.

It was important to this Israeli Jewish interviewee to emphasize that in peace activism the needs and interests of both Israelis and Palestinians were to be taken into account and therefore peace activism could not according to her be reduced to merely fighting against the occupation either. However, she noted, substantively there was not very much difference as working against the occupation and its manifestations were still very much part of peace activism, but, she underlined, she engaged in these activities out of an Israeli interest as "we're not Palestinians" (I13). However, balancing between solidarity and peace activism has been constantly under discussion inside Bat Shalom.

While not all of the interviewees saw any contradictions in using the terms "peace" and "peace activist", the women very often did connect their activism to larger contexts and found other more suitable denominators for it, such as: "human activities" (I10), "solidarity and peace" (I2) "justice" (P6), "freedom" (P8), "social activism" (I12, I9), "political activism" (I7), "human rights" (P5; P9), "equality and human rights" (I6), "anti-colonialism" (I4), "peace and empowerment" (P1). There was a clear tendency not limit the term peace but to see it from a very comprehensive perspective, as a "concept of life, about society, about politics, about women...it's much more vast...grasp of reality

than just shouting down with occupation in a demonstration." (I3) One of the Palestinian interviewees saw her peace activism directly connected to her activism as a politician and as a feminist:

I'm a peace activist, at the same time I'm a feminist and I'm a politician. So I can see that the three of them are related to each other...Because as a peace activist, if I am not believing in the feminist principles which is related to self-determination, freedom, and human rights and so on I couldn't be a peace activist...at the same time with the politics, the politics with self-determination...as a person who believes in my self-determination as a woman, my freedom as a woman, I couldn't be under occupation. I see that from the personal level to the national level. So it is reflected, and I can see it is also on the global level. Because...as I want my people to live in freedom, I want other people to live in freedom...I cannot ask that for myself without asking it for the other. (Zahira Kamal)

Linking her activism for peace to the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and her personal freedom as a woman, Kamal simultaneously saw the connection between the personal to the national political level and even beyond, to the global level.

All and all, the comments of the women highlight two important points when it comes to speaking about peace activism in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Firstly, the women clearly acknowledged the difficulty of speaking about peace when the conflict was not yet over. Therefore, they had found alternative titles for their activism, titles that often were very holistic. Secondly, in defining their activism in these broad terms, the women conform to a pattern of women's activism in other conflict zones. As noted by El-Bushra, women often through their activism broaden the meaning of the term peace; coming very close to what Johan Galtung has termed positive peace.

6.2 Feminism and the Jerusalem Link

According to the original Link proposal, the two main focuses of its activism were to be women's issues, and the roles of gender and nation in the peace process. (ILA Reshet JL Proposal n.d.,6) Both organizations of the Link define themselves as feminist: Bat Shalom website defines it as "an Israeli national feminist grassroots organization" (BS 2008) while one of the JCW interviewees described the organization as "a Palestinian women's slash feminist organization" (P7). For both JCW and Bat Shalom members, this combination of an organization working to end the conflict and achieve peace, simultaneously tackling women's issues, has been an important aspect of the work:

I3: I think it's very important that there is a feminist...peace organization. Because you have feminist organizations, you have peace organizations but here you have a feminist peace organization, it's combining the situation of women with the conflict.

For the part of JCW also, already the 1994 report of JCW activities stated as the main objective of the organization “to advance Palestinian women’s status and human rights issues” but also mentioned as an objective “advancing of the peace process within its own capacity and domain.” (BSA BS Events II JCW Report on 1994 Activities). However, one of the Palestinian interviewees described the relationship of peace building and women’s empowerment in the work of JCW in the following way:

P4: Peace organization, it’s true that we, that the Jerusalem Center has component, the peace building programme...I don’t want to monopolize the word peace organization, because we’re not the only peace organization. We are a women’s organization that’s worked for women empowerment and works for ...advocating for a just and... sustainable peace.

Working for peace has therefore been only one part of the work of JCW, reflecting very much the situation of Palestinian NGOs a whole, as found by Hassassian (2002) and Tötterman (2002).

In framing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Link very much used the perspective of feminism. According to almost all of the interviewees, feminism was inherent to the Jerusalem Link and to both of its organizations, mostly seen in connection to empowering women in different realms including the peace process. The critical voices maintained that the members of the Link, despite vowing to be feminist still adhered to nationalistic values instead of gender values such as “justice, freedom, liberty, equality...for all” and “no barriers between people based on gender, on racism on colour” (P6), and that in the end the Link was not that much different from its male counterparts. Others noted that the definition of being feminist had not ever really been discussed jointly (I12), as it was difficult if not impossible “...because you talk about two different societies” (P9). Some however did believe that there was a certain very basic commonality between the women based on the experience of patriarchy:

P5: ...because women have a...shared way of experiencing the world in terms of their gender relations...they develop...a system or a framework of thought and analysis based on their experience that is... different.

This interviewee furthermore believed that as a result of the experience of patriarchy and oppression, women had a specific outlook on issues. However, others noted, even if assuming a certain communality in the way of experiencing the world by women, the experiences of women still differed according to their respective societies, as each one had a “different periphery” (I2) around them. An Israeli interviewee described this difference in terms of the women of the Link:

I13: ...we have on both sides women who are very active politically and accustomed to being in the political world of the men. But the political world of the men in each society is different... there is a difference...in the way in which you work.

Despite holding similar positions in their respective societies, Israeli and Palestinian women still had to tackle very different circumstances: while Israel was already an established state, Palestinian women were still awaiting the state where their rights as women could be realized. Therefore, while in the past the two organizations did have some joint activities around feminism and feminist theory, the status of women and equality have been largely left for each organization to tackle separately.

Being a feminist organization for Bat Shalom in the context of Israel has meant addressing issues such as militarization of the society, and, among other things, trying to

...make linkage between...issues such as high-policy and high-politics, the security and the foreign policy and especially the occupation of the Palestinian lands. And internal issues such as social justice, the status of women in Israel, how the continuous war and this continuous external struggle give rise and strengthen the militaristic elements within the Israeli society and what sort of effect it has on women's status. How the allocation of the budget is made, and how it affects on women's issues. (I11)

On a practical level, these linkages have been drawn between issues such as the rise of domestic violence and militarism, and between social equality and the money allocated for the army and the settlements in OPT. The purpose has been to demonstrate to different groups of women inside Israel, how the conflict and militarism are connected to their every-day life and to enable women to discuss these issues.

For JCW, empowering women and women's rights in the Palestinian conflict are at the core of its activism, but using the term feminist did still required some clarification: .

P4: ...we don't have the same definition of Western feminism...to the feminism we speak about. But it's very much related because we are very much interested in advocating and raising Palestinian women and men's awareness of the importance of women's rights and women's... participation in politics, in civil society, in the making up of the Palestinian society and the building of democratic Palestinian society which guarantees the rights of everybody, minorities, marginalized groups, women...equal citizenship, equality in law...but in our own context, yani, in our own cultural context. This is how we are different...we take into consideration the social context we are in. Which is a completely difficult one.

This interviewee stated adhering to post-colonial feminism as opposed to Western feminism, emphasizing that post-colonial feminism was sensitive to the difficult context of the Palestinians. Many Israeli interviewees also highlighted the fact that the struggle of

Palestinian women was much harder than theirs, as the women not only were oppressed by their own society and traditions but were oppressed as Palestinians under Israeli occupation. Another Palestinian interviewee explained the strategies she used in arguing for women's rights within her own society:

P3: But, what one learns over the years is that...we've got also to be careful...it's not only the ideas and the principles that we uphold that are important, it's also how we get to people, how do we come to make a change, yes, this is very important. And I'm always learning it out of experience against a process of revolution to change. Usually people don't succeed. It's evolution, yes, that you know makes a difference. And even when we come to discuss about our equal rights among Muslim women and so on, I always believe there are so many rights that have been given to women in the Muslim religion that are not being practiced and exercised...and if I can fulfil...all these rights I'm getting almost 60-70 percent of the rights. Without really antagonizing the whole society and thinking look at these elite women, they want to, just change the whole society ... I cannot solve all problems at the same time, this is an impossibility...we cannot have internal revolution and win that revolution. We haven't won our political agenda, so let alone you know. But we can achieve a lot you know at improving the situation.

Palestinian women activists have had to learn to balance between the national agenda, striving for equality, and the power of religion and traditions.

While some of the interviewees hesitated using the term "feminist" to describe themselves, every one of the interviewees believed in equality and was working for women's empowerment. According to the minimalist definition of feminism employed by Young, the women of both JCW and Bat Shalom could be therefore at least *de facto* be categorized as feminists. Moreover, for some, feminism had much deeper implications than the mere advancement of the status of women:

P5: ...I look at it as a view of understanding power relations at the personal and the public level, and the global. And...it... started with power relations men versus women, but it's much more than that. It's analysing the gender relations that helped us understand a larger contexts of power imbalance. So you have...power imbalance between women, not only between men and women.

According to the Palestinian interviewee, feminism was therefore useful for not only understanding powers between men and women, but also for understanding power relations between women. For other women, being feminist had to do with abandoning nationalist values (P6, I8), being a force shaping every aspect of ones life (I3), and changing societal structures and values in terms of "what is seen as worthwhile and legitimate" (I13).

Some women on both sides discarded the essentialist feminist discourse on women, based on motherhood. An Israeli interviewee claimed that as a feminist organi-

zation Bat Shalom would not for example use the argumentation that many Israeli anti-occupation mothers' groups were employing:

I11: ...I know of women's groups who try to work through saying OK we are mothers of soldiers, it has to do very personally with us and they would go to the media and speak as mothers of soldiers...That what's happening in the occupied territories it's not good for our sons...they have to confront all kinds of things, and they dehumanise the Palestinians but they also they dehumanise themselves. And that the occupation corrupts the occupier as well, and we pay the price and this is our sons and we want our sons out of the occupied territories. And this is sort of things we would not do...because there is very strong feeling that as feminists we do not...want to use our voice as mothers because it is problematic. Or we believe in ending the occupation not necessarily because it's bad for our sons in the army...but because we have kind of a very political and philosophical understanding of the world because of solidarity with Palestinians because we believe in universal values etc.

Despite this claim, there were both Israeli and Palestinian women who spoke about themselves as feminists and as mothers simultaneously, confirming El-Bushra's argument on how women in their argumentation mix essentialist and social constructionist argumentation.

Women of the Link valued cooperation between women especially because they, among other things, considered women to be more committed, responsible and dedicated to their goals (I7; P8; P9) whether because they had not been part of the power game (P9), or because of the multiple roles women played in their societies (I7). Because of these multiple roles as mothers, sisters, workers and activists, women would also have a wider vision on things (I7). As victims of war, the women were seen as having a more vested interest in reaching peace (I1), and as mothers they would always be committed to a better future for their children (P1). Women, according to the interviewees, always chose the peaceful solution (P1), were more patient (I1), more able to compromise (I2, I9), and capable of arriving at a win-win situation in discussions (I9). Furthermore, women as mothers and sisters were able to "gather between mind and the heart" (I7), and as women could find creative solutions to conflicts (I1). Women were also perceived to dialogue in a different way, involving much more emotions and personal contact than was customary in mixed groups (I13). Finally, an interviewee asserted, precisely because the Link was all women, she would have expected them to do a better job than they had done (P8).

Some women also felt that as women they could transgress certain difficulties the groups involving males had to face, based on the gendered roles of warfare. As women very rarely have been involved in acts of violence, it was considered easier for them to communicate with each other (I6):

I13: ...you look at an Israeli man, and you see an Israeli soldier, and look at a Palestinian and you see a terrorist, and these were the stereotypes but they were male stereotypes. And I felt that as women we didn't have to get over that barrier, I mean it didn't mean that we immediately loved each other, but I did think we had a certain mutuality that made it little bit easier for us.

Women as women could therefore cross certain boundaries that existed between males from both societies.

Concerning the “women only” basis of the Jerusalem Link and its organizations, women had differing opinions. Many women, especially on the Palestinian side, would have been ready to include men, especially men holding similar values, to the realm of the Link, and did not see any disadvantages in doing so. Others interviewees claimed that in joint groups the men always took the lead, and there was not enough room for the women to express and develop their thoughts. Therefore, women-only organizations were, at least for the moment, seen as necessary for the women to find their own separate voice. These women also maintained that there already were enough mixed groups and organizations, and therefore there would be no added value to include men to the Link.

I18: ...after having been politically active...for years and years and years in working with men, there is no disadvantage what so ever [in being only women]. I mean as difficult it is working with women I would never ever in thousand zillion years go back to working with men...Fifty percent of our energy would be wasted going from trying to do something in the outside to trying to uphold our own inside of the organization...just shutting them up takes you a long long time...they usually they want to decide it...and they want you to do it. I mean give me a break have been there, I don't have the time for that shit. It's a waste of time.

Many of the interviewees had taken part in mixed organizations, and had experienced their disadvantages for women. However, even those who did not believe particularly in the need for a separate space for women, the existence of a separate women's organization was justified because of its distinct character and voice:

I13: Now I don't accept the idea of some women in Bat Shalom who say that if there would have been men they would have shut us up and our voice wouldn't be heard and they would take over the discussion and take over the leadership. I don't see myself as so weak. I'm on equal terms with men...and none of them is going to shut me out. So I don't think of Bat Shalom as some kind of refuge but I think it's distinct voice.

Even more, some felt that by including men, the Link would lose its special source of strength based on different views and concerns that women had concerning peace:

I11: We co...contribute different perspectives, different issues, mostly concerned...besides the obvious political issue, with reconciliation and what it takes to build a just society be-

cause peace is not an objective, peace is a means building a just society and that's the problem...both Palestinians and the Israelis are going to have to deal with on the day after signing...an agreement. So there are lots of things that women bring in different kinds of issues and different perspectives and that's why women's voices are crucial.

Another interviewee further maintained that the Link and its organizations being only women was in the end also “a tautology kind of thing” (I8) as men had never and would never take up the same issues the Link was emphasizing.

As downsides to being a women's organizations some mentioned missing the point of view of the men (P8), and the fact that “that if you wanna change the world we cannot make it alone because we are part of a community...and half of it is men.” (I7) Some women also claimed that as a women's organization they were easily dismissed (I1). On the other hand, because of the accusation of women being politically naïve and their work not being taken seriously, they could on the other hand “do whatever they liked” (P7). At worst, however, a separate high-level organization could be dismissed as standing outside its community:

P3: ...because this maybe...appears a sort of alienation, separation from the community and people tend to look at this group: these people they consider themselves as they lead, that they know everything. They're not part of us and it's very important for any activator, the feeling of ownership should be there by everybody. And if this group works separately then this feeling of ownership by the people concerned is missing, is lost.

In order to really make a change, the ownership of, and channels to the respective communities were therefore of uttermost importance.

In the end most, if not all of the interviewees did give recognition to the distinct experiences and potentials of women and their ability to contribute to peace building in a special way. During the Bat Shalom General Assembly meeting, Molly Malekar, addressing the membership of Bat Shalom, stated that women were not only the victims of war, poverty and racism, but in their activism challenged the very structures producing the suffering:

In our experience, we are convinced that violence and oppression must be stopped everywhere. We cannot demand the cessation of violence against us without a similar demand for the cessation of violence against all others. Women cannot demand their liberty when they are part of the oppression of another group. Based on this understanding, we cross lines and fences, hidden fences and tangible checkpoints. Our stubborn movement to cross fences and checkpoints, to constantly subvert the ghettos and norms, in the reality of the separation fence, all of which close around us from every direction and define the boundaries of the conscience – that is the movement that we invite every woman to join. (Malekar 2005)

Women's border-transgressing activism, according to Malekar, posed a continuous challenge to the Israeli propaganda justifying the occupation on Palestinians.

6.3 The International Women's Commission Initiative

The second intifada, while causing tensions and a halt in the activities of the Link, also brought up a new initiative by the women of the Link: establishing the International Women's Commission. According to the idea, IWC would act as an advisory body to the official negotiations from a gender perspective, and be composed of Israeli, Palestinian, and international women. Furthermore, the purpose was to ensure that the voice of the civil society and peace activists would be incorporated to the official peace process. As such, the idea represented one possible way to put the ideas of the UNSCR 1325 into practice. According to UNSCR 1325, the representation of women should be ensured in all levels of decision-making in conflict resolution and peace processes, and local women's peace groups and initiatives should be supported in an effort to adopt a gender perspective to peace agreements. Naomi Chazan, one of the initiators of the IWC, has characterized the IWC initiative as an independent strategy for the inclusion of women, combining the advantages of the informal and formal inclusion of women to conflict resolution. As an independent advisory body with a recognized status, IWC would provide a linkage between the grassroots and official negotiations. (IWC 2008; Chazan 2003, 55-57; UNSC 2000)

It was the experienced helplessness felt by women during the intifada that gave rise to the idea of IWC:

The idea of the International Women's Commission was developed during the height of the reoccupation of Palestinian towns and villages in the Spring of 2002. It was a feminist attempt to break through the prevalent discourses on both sides. It was a new idea, and, I should also admit, it was daring and ambitious given the social climate at the time. However, such times require new thinking along new lines... (Abu-Dayyeh Shamas 2003, 53)

I13: ...our idea...of maybe finally getting some voice...because there's also sense this whole period of the intifada that all these things are happening and they are happening to us, and we don't have any say in that. And that's when the idea of the International Women's Commission came up, to at least somehow that we can be heard. Somehow.

Women clearly felt that their voice was not being heard, they were excluded from the official peace process, and therefore wanted to change the terms of reference by challenging the existing power structures and by introducing a feminist gender framework. (BSA Board 2004 IWC Two days meeting 23-24/01/2004).

In May 2002, Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas, WCLAC director and JCW board member addressed the United Nations Security Council together with then Bat Shalom director Terry Greenblatt (Abu-Dayyeh Shamas 2002; Greenblatt 2002), urging it to include women in the peace process according to its own resolution 1325. Terry Greenblatt maintained:

You need us, because if the goal is not simply the absence of war, but the creation of a sustainable peace by fostering fundamental societal changes, we are crucial to everyone's security concerns. You need us, because wars are no longer fought on battlefields. You have brought the war home to us. Many more civilians than soldiers are being killed in ours and other conflicts around the world. The wars are being waged now on our doorsteps and in our living rooms and in our sacred houses and ceremonies of religious worship, and women have a vested interest in keeping families and communities safe. You need us, because to honorably comply with your own legislation, Resolution 1325, we must be included. (Greenblatt 2002)

In her argumentation for the inclusion of women, Greenblatt therefore very clearly used as a starting point the specific roles and experiences women have during conflicts. In addition, the participation of women was perceived necessary in order “to maintain connection to the realities of relevant societies” but also because women possess qualities that have so far remained unutilized in conflict resolution such as the “social intelligence” and “social courage”. (Abu-Dayyeh Shamas 2002; Greenblatt 2002) In August 2002, the same two women approached the so-called Quartet²² via a letter, proposing the endorsement of the idea of IWC. Furthermore, the letter suggested rather optimistically that “[a]ll future negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians be carried out fill full participation of women.” (Abu-Dayyeh Shamas & Greenblatt 2002)

IWC was finally launched in July 2005 as part of a women's meeting in Istanbul. While the original idea of IWC had been to gain a recognized status from the main powers involved in negotiations for Israeli-Palestinian peace, the Commission in the end was established under the auspices of UNIFEM without official ratification. However, IWC has since its establishment gained some legitimization from legislation passed both in Israel and Palestine. In September 2005, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas gave official recognition to the Commission through a Presidential degree. In June 2005 also the Israeli Knesset had passed an amendment to the Equal Rights for Women Law, ensuring appropriate representation for women in all decision-making bodies of the state, including those having to do with conflict resolution and issues of security. (IWC 2008; Prince Gibson 2005; UNIFEM 2006)

While in the beginning, the Jerusalem Link women considered using the Principles of the Link as a starting point for IWC, this never materialized as it was thought that the inclusion of these principles would severely limit the amount of women that could then be involved. The principles adopted by IWC therefore are very general, emphasizing an end to occupation, just peace, and the establishment of a Palestinian

²² Quartet refers to the four actors of USA, EU, UN, and Russia, involved in resolving the Middle East conflict.

state. Currently IWC constitutes of 18 Palestinian, 17 Israeli women, and 10 international women. Majority of these women have also been affiliated to the Jerusalem Link at some point of their careers. In addition to these women, IWC also has 9 honorary members, and 3 honorary co-chairs, composed of international political women, most of them holding influential positions in their respective societies. As an example, the honorary co-chairs are President of Finland Tarja Halonen, President of Liberia Ellen Sirleaf, and Prime Minister of New Zealand Helen Clark, expressing the clear desire of IWC to gain high-level international recognition and support. (IWC 2008)

When arguing for the inclusion of women in peace negotiations and the endorsement of the idea of IWC, the women have repeatedly referred to the experience they have gained through the process of dialogue within the Jerusalem Link:

We have developed the foundations of an authentic political dialogue grounded in transparency, responsibility, and honorable intention that have remarkably remained sustainable and productive, even in the current disastrous circumstances. We are becoming more adept at what the Italian feminists call “processes of rooting and shifting”, remaining centered in the essence of one’s position, while at the same time imagining how the world is seen through the eyes of the other. (Greenblatt 2003, 46)

Greenblatt, in context of transversalism, clearly referred to such mode of dialogue as an achievement of women and expression of feminism. IWC has furthermore been highlighted by her as a new and creative initiative, rooted in feminist thinking that challenges “the stereotypes, status quo, conventional wisdom or lack of real information”. (Greenblatt 2003, 47)

However, not all the women interviewed supported the idea of IWC. A Palestinian interviewee claimed that while the women of the Link had not managed to agree on so many important issues, bringing them into negotiation table would not introduce a new approach to the existing one. Merely being women, according to this interviewee, was not enough for an alternative approach but further questions of “what kind of women...what kind of...thinking these women hold” (P6) needed to be asked and evaluated. In a similar way, an Israeli interviewee stated that when bringing women to the negotiating table, their qualities and values were important: “I think some of our women politicians are such that I rather take 500 men than one of them there.” (I8) From another perspective, a Palestinian interviewee was of the opinion that prior going to negotiations, and asking for international recognition, the women needed to “acquire the legitimacy on the ground” (P8) for IWC.

In the end, although the purpose of the IWC initiative has not been “to repeat the existing attempts of having parallel peace agreements” or “to create a women’s

ghetto” (Abu-Dayyeh Shamas 2003,) it will be interesting to see that if employed, will IWC succeed in incorporating the voice of women and civil society to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, or whether it risks creating a separate gender corner, making it even harder to mainstream the presence of women at the official level negotiations. At least for now, the potential offered by the IWC has remained unused.

7. Conclusion: Keeping Alive the Symbol

Both the Jerusalem Center for Women and Bat Shalom have since their establishment in 1994 developed into highly professionalized non-governmental organizations with several staff members and on-going projects which address the political situation and the status of women in the two societies from multiple angles. This process of increasing institutionalization or “ngoization” while seen as problematic by much feminist research and also by some participants of the Link, seemed for the Link to also serve the purpose of maintaining the relations between the sister organizations despite the political turmoil and violence surrounding them. The interviewees highlighted the established relationship, at the time of the research having lasted already for over 10 years, as an achievement especially for women. While confirming Young’s claim that institutionalization and feminism are not necessarily opposed to one another, the observation also calls for more research on the disempowering and empowering factors of institutionalization for women’s transnational activities in conflict zones.

Both organizations of the Link have engaged in a variety of activities, and therefore demonstrate clearly the difficulty of classifying the activities of a women’s organization under one single category. In terms of the categorization of El-Bushra (2003; 2007), both Bat Shalom and JCW engaged in activities in at least three categories: peace building, advocacy, and promoting women’s inclusion in decision-making. Furthermore, both organizations as hybrid P/CROs possessed the capability to change and redirect their activities in relation to the developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the case of Jerusalem Link not only proves the positive sides to that flexibility but illustrates how the negative developments in the conflict can hamper joint work as due to the second Intifada both organizations had focused more on their independent activities. One could therefore argue again that the institutionalization of the relationship between the two organizations has kept the Link alive when many other joint programmes in the aftermath of September 2000 simply faded away.

The various activities of the Link and its organizations also confirm what El-Bushra has called the broad concept of peace enacted by women in their activism, which in turn is informed by the specific experiences of women during conflict. JCW and Bat Shalom, together and separately, have demonstrated against violence, organized dialogues, published press releases, engaged in activities with families of prisoners, monitored elections, addressed questions of social inequality, educated women politically, and worked for the rights of Palestinian Jerusalemites. This multiplicity of activities on the organizational level cohered to the definitions the members of these organi-

zations used in describing their activism. In addition to peace activism, the women spoke of social activism, ending the occupation, human rights, justice, and anti-colonialism. As such, these answers are consistent with the concept of positive peace as defined by Galtung. Clearly, peace for these women has been much more than the absence of open violence but implied equal citizenship, social equality, the realization of human rights, and the absence of militarism.

The political principles of the Jerusalem Link have formed the basis of its activism. This political aspect of the work has enabled the women to meet and work together even amidst violent escalations of the conflict. While serving as the goal-determining agenda of the Link, the principles have also been central to the development of the method of political dialoguing practiced by the Link. From their onset, the political principles have been under constant re-working, “the process of disagreeing and agreeing”. This process likens the transversal politics of “rooting and shifting”, as described by Nira Yuval-Davis (1997), in recognising the different rootings of the women but at the same time, increasingly understanding the other side. However, the work of the Link goes beyond the mere understanding of the other side, as the purpose of the women is not to practice “dialogue for the sake of dialogue”, but to formulate their common political agenda. Furthermore, the targets of the process of agreeing and disagreeing are not only the individuals involved, but through the political agenda the women wish to address the issues central to the conflict on the macro-level. Some of the interviewees saw this process-like manner of political dialogue as an expression of the feminism of the Link.

While on the organizational level Bat Shalom and JCW were identified as feminist organizations, some of the Link members were hesitant in using the word to describe themselves. However, all of the women believed in equality, and were working for the empowerment of women. The hesitance to use the word feminist then clearly illustrates the loaded nature of the word in the eyes of especially non-Western women, even when these women have been heavily involved in working for women’s rights. At the same time, the women of the Jerusalem Link had found feminism a useful strategy to gain support to their ideas both locally and internationally. The Jerusalem Link women were demanding their voice to be heard *as women*, and networked successfully with women politicians and women’s organizations around the world. In addition, women from both sides especially valued joint work between women, and used both essentialist and social constructionist arguments to back up their claims. In general, the interviewees believed that women had a distinct voice in issues of war and peace, and

because of the specific nature of women's experiences, women could also contribute to peace building in alternative, creative ways. However, while recognizing on a very basic level that the common denominator between Israeli and Palestinian women could be their experience of oppression as women, the issue of inequality between men and women had been largely left out the discussions of the Link. The Jerusalem Link women have so far only used the joint feminist frame in connection to the conflict and women's role in the peace process. Partly because of this choice, I argue, the differences between women have manifested themselves especially clearly in the work of the Jerusalem Link.

Nationalism poses a difficult challenge to transnational activism as it can deepen distinctions between peoples. However, the women of the Jerusalem Link were not unified in their positions to nationalism. On both sides there were women that were non-nationalists, some of them because of their feminist beliefs. These feminist women considered it impossible to combine feminism with nationalism, and for them, feminism had led to the abandonment of nationalism. But again, the Zionist women of Bat Shalom saw no contradiction between their identities as feminists and nationalists. In the practical work of the Link these differences regarding nationalism materialized as the different solutions the women were willing to consider to the conflict. The Israeli Zionist women vowed in the name of two-state solution and a Jewish state, and the non-nationalist Israeli women wanted an Israeli state for all its citizens. On the other hand, the Palestinian non-nationalist women were ready to consider a joint bi-national state as a solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict, as were some of the Israeli non-nationalists. These basic positions held by the women further influenced the discussion on the right of return, a topic that especially the Zionist Israeli women found problematic because of the demographic threat it imposed.

Women from both sides argued for their activism in the Link in ways that could be at a first glance interpreted primarily as nationalist. The Israeli women stated being active in the Link for the sake of Israel, and the Palestinian women connected their activism to the Palestinian struggle for freedom. However, especially on the Palestinian side some of these same women simultaneously stated being non-nationalists. Yet, although according to the principles of transversal politics the non-nationalist women from both sides should have been able to connect based on their shared values, this in reality was not to a significant extent the case. If anything, these small observations at least leave room for another explanatory factor which largely determined the experi-

ences women had from the joint work, and affected the way they viewed the conflict: the position of power they held in the hierarchy of the Israeli occupation.

Third World Feminists have constantly called for more attention to the powers between women as they manifest themselves between women of different ethnicities, races and classes, and, in this case, between women who belong to the occupiers and the occupied. The Israeli military occupation positions women of different backgrounds in distinctively, affecting the ways women both experienced and perceived the conflict. While both Israeli and Palestinian women of the Link had experienced oppression from the men in their society, the primary source for inequality inside the Link was still the Israeli occupation and the power structures it created between the women. Furthermore, these powers were not manifested only on the Israeli-Palestinian level, but formed a more complex hierarchy, following largely along the lines of ethnicity. The women holding the most power in this hierarchy were the Ashkenazi Jewish women, followed by the Mizrahi Jewish and the Israeli Palestinian women, while the Palestinian women were at the bottom of the hierarchy. While the Mizrahi women felt oppressed by the Ashkenazi Jewish women, the Israeli Palestinian women were the third class citizens of the state of Israel, oppressed by both Ashkenazi and Mizrahi women. Nevertheless, even the Israeli Palestinian women were citizens of a country that was oppressing the Palestinian population as a whole, and Palestinian women in particular.

These positions in the power hierarchy also influenced very strongly the way in which women viewed the conflict. While all the women agreed that the Israeli occupation was at the heart of the conflict, the Ashkenazi women of Bat Shalom emphasized the conflict on an Israeli-Palestinian level, as did the Palestinian women. However, for the Israeli Palestinian and Mizrahi interviewees it was clear that the issue of inequality inside Israel was connected to the conflict. They saw the oppression they were facing, whether because they were “the Arabic Jewish” or “the Palestinians”, as an extension of the same occupying structure that was oppressing the Palestinians of OPT and therefore called it the “occupation inside Israel”. These different experiences of oppression were in many ways more central in defining the reality of the work in the Link than mere nationalism. This finding suggests that when designing women’s transnational activities in the context of on-going conflict, one needs take the issues of power and power asymmetries between women under careful consideration, and also be cautious of assuming automatic solidarity between women.

At the same time, however, it is important to emphasize that the power hierarchies described above are only one approach to the complex relations between women

of the Jerusalem Link. Being part of the occupied population, the Palestinian women of OPT also simultaneously held powerful positions inside their community as politicians, ministers, and heads of organizations. In addition, these women had important international connections, and were well known abroad. Many times these positions were in fact more powerful than those held by their Israeli counterparts in Israel. Also, in terms of class and age there were differences between women. The most predominant members of the Link on both sides have been middle-aged, middle class, academically educated women, and therefore it has been hard for the younger non-academic women to enter the Link, especially if they come from Mizrahi or Israeli Palestinian backgrounds. This elite-image of the Link is one of the main reasons for the fact that the grassroots connections of the Link have remained weak.

All and all, the Jerusalem Link is an excellent case study of the growing importance of the NGO sector in conflict resolution. It illustrates the fact how women can through NGOs advocate for their inclusion in peace building and official peace processes, and try to reframe conflict from a more holistic perspective. The institutional setting of the Jerusalem Link, composed of two sister organizations, one Palestinian and one Israeli, has been one of the primary reasons for the popularity of the Link among international donors and international women. The international community has wanted to support a group of women who in a symbol-like manner represent what the future of the Middle East could look like. At the same time, engaging in transnational activity has provided the Link with the legitimacy for demanding their voice to be heard in the peace talks. Aside from its institutional structure, the Link is most importantly sustained by its members, who see it as one of the avenues for ending the occupation and for advocating their vision of peace.

However fascinating the Link might look on the outside, one still has to remember that it faces huge challenges because of the various boundaries and borders existing between the women both physically and in terms of nationalism, power, and class. Accordingly, one of my interviewees, during our two-hour discussion, emphasized me the importance of quoting her and her words in the right context. By this context she meant the on-going Israeli occupation, as she wanted to ensure that her words were not used to strengthen the illusion which has often been created when Israeli and Palestinian women speak together to international audiences: that there in reality is no problem. My sincere hope is therefore that in this thesis I have managed to describe the Link and the experiences of its members in its context without understating or overstating the Link's importance. For the Jerusalem Link, the Israeli military occupation is its

raison d'être as it works towards ending it, but, at the same time, the occupation remains the central challenge to its work, creating unequal power relations between its members, and constantly testing mutual trust. Therefore the Link exists both because of the occupation and in spite of it, constantly contesting the boundaries created by the occupation but at the same time reliving these boundaries over and over again.

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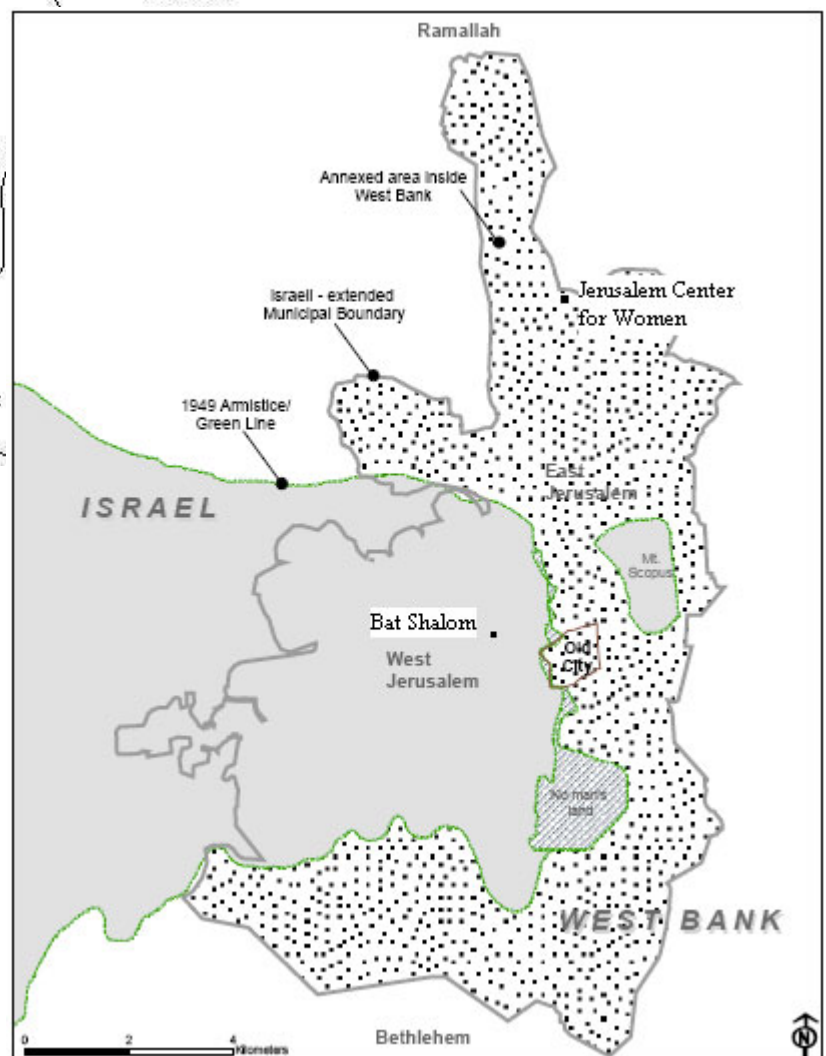
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Attachment 1: Maps

Map 1: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory



Map 2: Bat Shalom and JCW Offices in Metropolitan Jerusalem



Sources: Map of Israel Modified Based on <http://geography.about.com/library/blank/blxisrael.htm>, viewed 1 May 2008; Jerusalem Map Modified based on OCHA (2007, 7).

Attachment 2: Outline for Interviewing the Directors

- Their role in the organisation
- Number of registered members
- Criteria of becoming a member
- What kind of members the organizations have (sociology)
- Changes in membership
- Structure of the board
- Changes in the membership, sociology, and structure of the Board
- Activities of the organization
- Activities together with the Palestinian women
- Main difficulties of the organisation
- Difficulties in working together with the Palestinian women
- Funding
- Whom to interview further

Attachment 3: List and short description of the interviewees

Bat Shalom

Khulood Badawi, field researcher for Association of Civil Rights in Israel and a Taa-yush activist. Member of Bat Shalom board in 2004-2005. 21/4/2005 Jerusalem.

Judy Blanc, Bat Shalom activist and previous board member. 23/5/2005 Jerusalem.

Naomi Chazan, Professor of Political Science, Hebrew University of Jerusalem (emerita); former Member of Knesset, Meretz Party; former Deputy Speaker of the Knesset. Founding member of Bat Shalom. 27/6/2005 Jerusalem.

Galia Golan, Founding member of Bat Shalom, Professor Hebrew University of Jerusalem (emerita) and Interdisciplinary Center, Herzeliya, and a Peace Now activist. 23/2.2005 and 2/3/2005 Herzeliya.

Nava Eisin, Director of the Archives of Jewish Education at Tel-Aviv University. Member of Bat Shalom board. 17/3/2005 Tel Aviv.

Ruth El-Raz, Clinical Social Worker, founding member of Women in Black. Bat Shalom board member. 10/3/2005 and 19/5/2005 Jerusalem.

Ravit Hananel, Ph.D. Student in Urban Planning, and Bat Shalom board member in 2004-2005. 27/6/2005 Tel Aviv.

Dafna Kaminer, Bat Shalom and Women in Black activist, former board member of Bat Shalom. 10/7/2005 Jerusalem.

Debby Lerman, Bat Shalom board member, Women in Black activist, and activist for worker's rights. 6/5/2005 Tel Aviv.

Molly Malekar, Director of Bat Shalom. 16/12/2004 Jerusalem.

Raya Rotem, Bat Shalom board member in 2004-2005, founding member of Women in Black. 09/3/2005 Jerusalem.

Aida Shibli, Nurse and Research coordinator at Hadassah Ein Karem, and activist of the Inter-religious Encounter Association. Member of Bat Shalom board in 2004-2005. 10/5/2005 Beit Hanina.

Lily Traubmann, Former Political Coordinator of Bat Shalom. 26/5/2005 Jerusalem.

Jerusalem Center for Women

Maha Abu Dayyeh Shamas, Director of Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling and JCW board member. 7/4/2005 Beit Hanina.

Lamis Alami, Former Director of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, Minister of Education and Higher Education, and JCW board member. 24/3/2005 Ramallah.

Hanan Aruri, Physiotherapist, UNDP employee, and JCW board member in 2004-2005. 10/4/2005 Ramallah.

Amneh Badran, Former Director of the Jerusalem Center for Women. 4/1/2005 Beit Hanina.

Violet Fasheh, Former Dean of Education, Bethlehem University, and JCW board member in 2004-2005. 20/6/2005 Ramallah.

Salwa Hdeib, Head of the Board of Trustees of JCW, and Former Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. 10/5/2005 Ramallah.

Huda Imam, Director of the Centre for Jerusalem Studies, Al-Quds University, and JCW board member. 17/5/2005 Jerusalem.

Zahira Kamal, Director of Palestinian Women Research and Documentation Center, former Minister for Women's Affairs, and Jerusalem Link founding member. 21/6/ 2005 Ramallah.

Natasha Khalidi, Director of the Jerusalem Center for Women. 25/4/2005 Beit Hanina.

Amal Khreishe Psychologist and Director of the Palestinian Working Women's Society, and JCW board member. 21/3/2005 and 22/3/2005 Ramallah.

Reema Shweiki, Director of the Capacity Building Department at the Palestinian Counseling Center, and JCW board member. 25/5/2005 Beit Hanina

Source: Combined from interviews and BS 2005b; BS 2008; IWC 2008, JCW 2005; JCW 2008.

Attachment 4: Outline for Interviewing Board Members

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Name

Year of Birth

Place of Birth

Religion

Ashkenazi/ Mizrahi

Profession

Activity in any other organization/political role

JERUSALEM LINK/BAT SHALOM/JERUSALEM CENTER FOR WOMEN

- How did you become a member of Bat Shalom/Jerusalem Center for Women?
- When?
- Your duties/responsibilities in your organization?
- What kind of activities do you take part in? (Joint/Independent)
- How often do you participate to the activities? (Joint/Independent)
- From the founding members: what was your role in founding the Jerusalem Link?
- Has the focus/ nature of the Jerusalem Link gone through any changes while you have been a member?
- What do you think is the significance of the Jerusalem Link? Why is it important?
- What do you hope to achieve through the Jerusalem Link?
- Do you consider yourself as a peace activist? Why? (Is there another word that would describe your activism better?)

EXPERIENCES OF COOPERATION

- What have been your expectations from “the other side” during the co-operation?
- On what kind of things have you agreed with the Palestinian/Israeli counterpart? Why?
- How do you come to the point of agreeing?
- What are the points of disagreement? Why?
- How do you deal with the points of disagreement?
- Has there been any change in the issues of disagreement over time?
- In what kinds of things you would *NOT* be ready to compromise?
- What have been the problems/major obstacles in co-operation?
- Have you become aware of cultural/ any other differences with the Israeli/Palestinian women? Do they form obstacles for co-operation? How?

THE JERUSALEM LINK AND THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

- How did the beginning of the Second Intifada affect the cooperation? Why?
- Has the participation to the Jerusalem Link changed the way you perceive the Israelis/Palestinians?
- Has the participation to the Jerusalem Link changed the way you perceive the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?
- What is the relation of the Jerusalem Link to the official level peace negotiations?
- Do you see any differences between the official peace negotiations and the Jerusalem Link discussions? What about similarities?
- What have you learned/been disappointed in?

NATIONAL IDENTITY

- How easy has it been for you as an Israeli Jewish/Palestinian/Israeli-Palestinian to participate to Jerusalem Link? What have been the special challenges because of your "ethnicity"?
- Have there been any points of disagreement among your own group (Israeli/Palestinian)? On what, why, how to solve...
- Have you felt equal to the Israeli/Palestinian side that has participated to the Jerusalem Link? Why?
- What do you think is the significance of the Jerusalem Link in relation to
 - * your own society/community?
 - * the Israeli/Palestinian society?
 - * the International Community?
- In what kind of issues do you pressure your own society?
- How has your own community challenged your participation to the Jerusalem Link? ("Negotiating with the Israelis/Palestinians") How do you answer them?
- Any support from your own community?

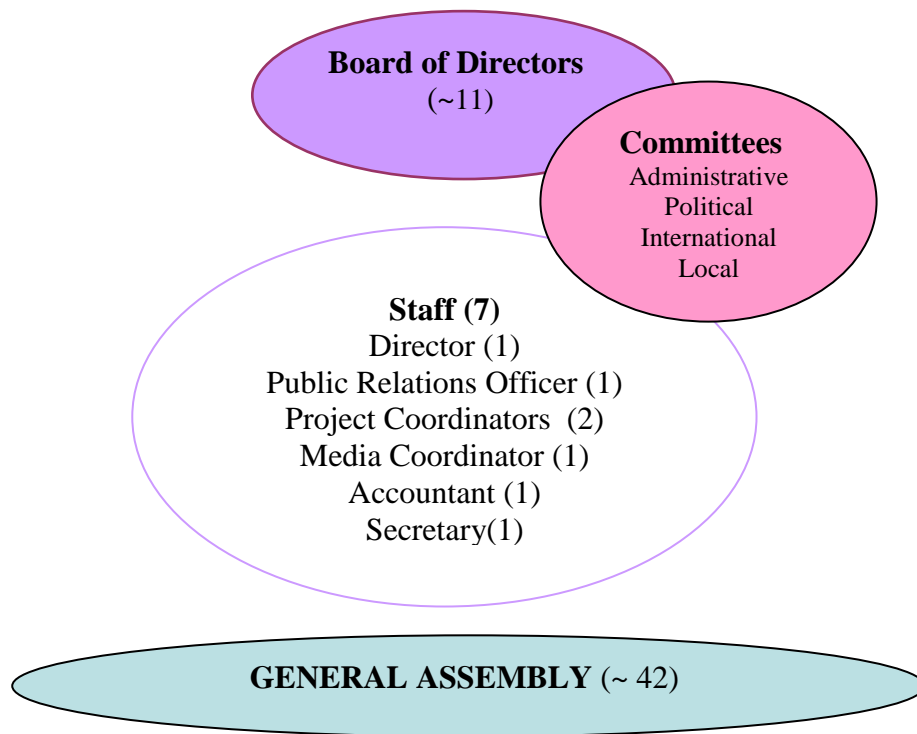
FEMINISIM

- Would you consider yourself as a feminist? (How well that word describes you?) Why?
- How typical "Israeli/Palestinian woman" are you?
- How do you think feminism related to the Jerusalem Link?
- What is the significance of co-operation between *women* from Israel and Palestine?
- Why women only? What are the benefits? Disadvantages?
- Would you be ready to include men? How would it change the nature of the Jerusalem Link?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADD SOMETHING???

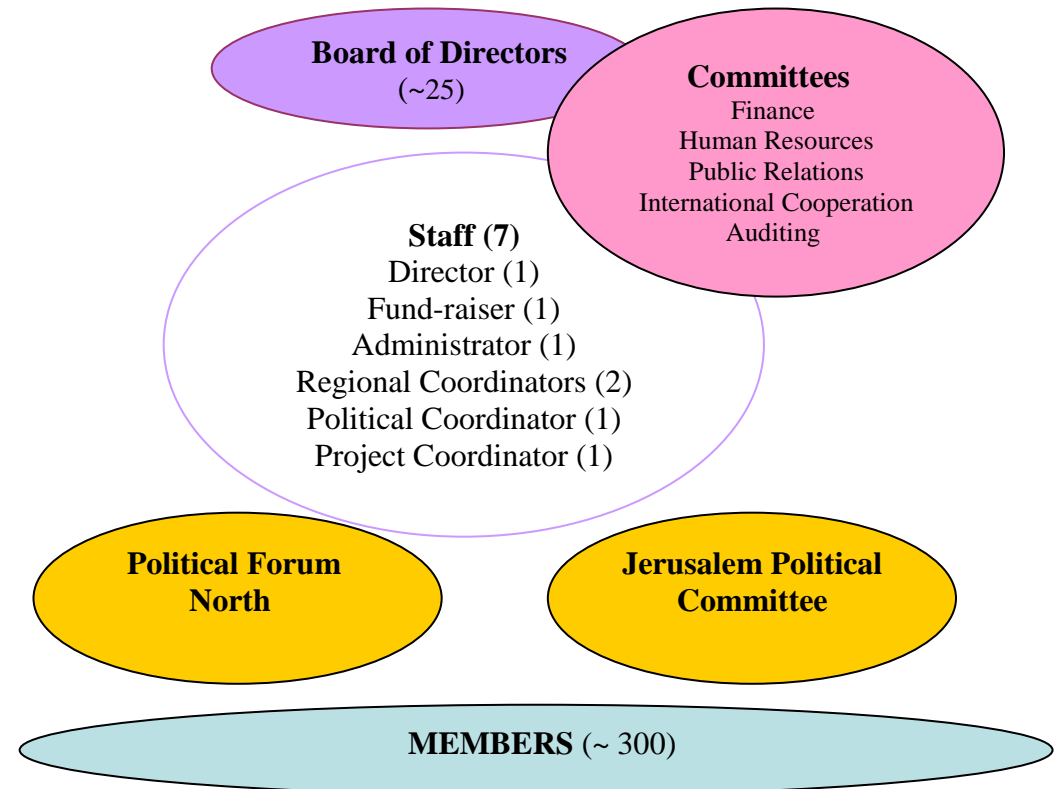
Attachment 5: Organigrammes

Jerusalem Center for Women



Friends of the Jerusalem Center for Women

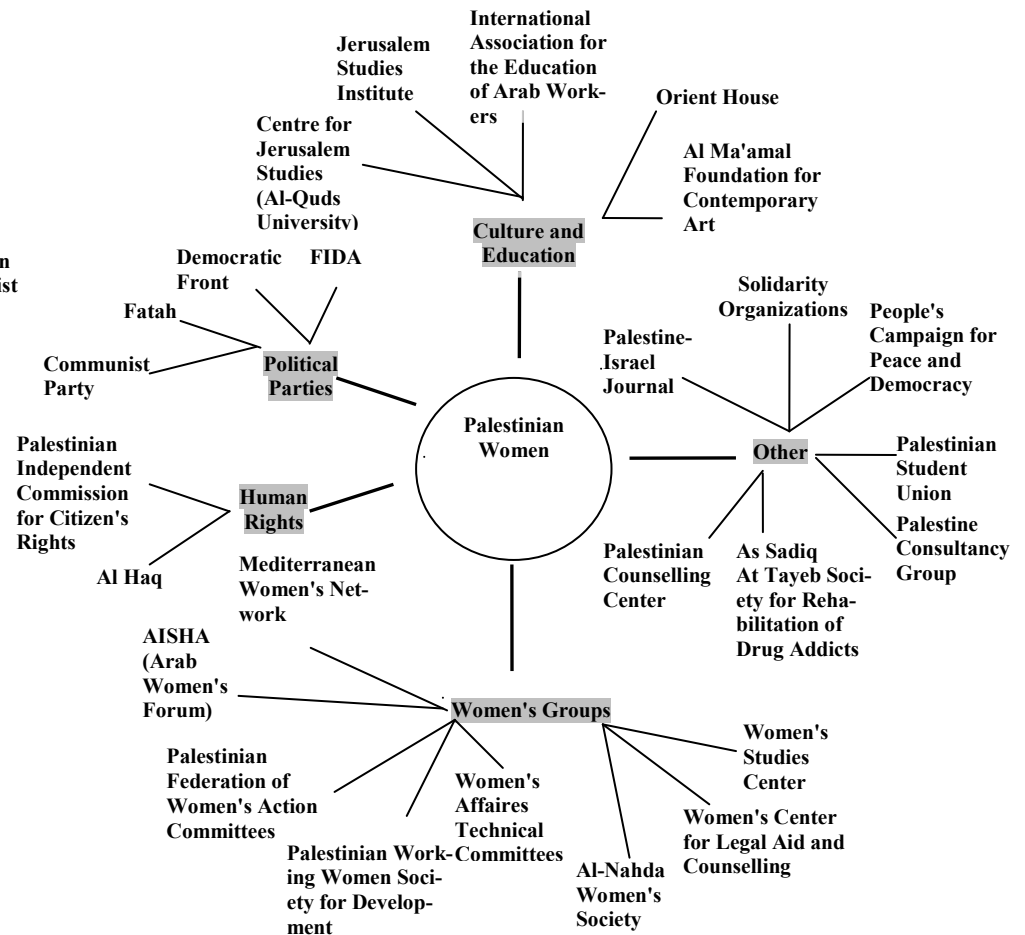
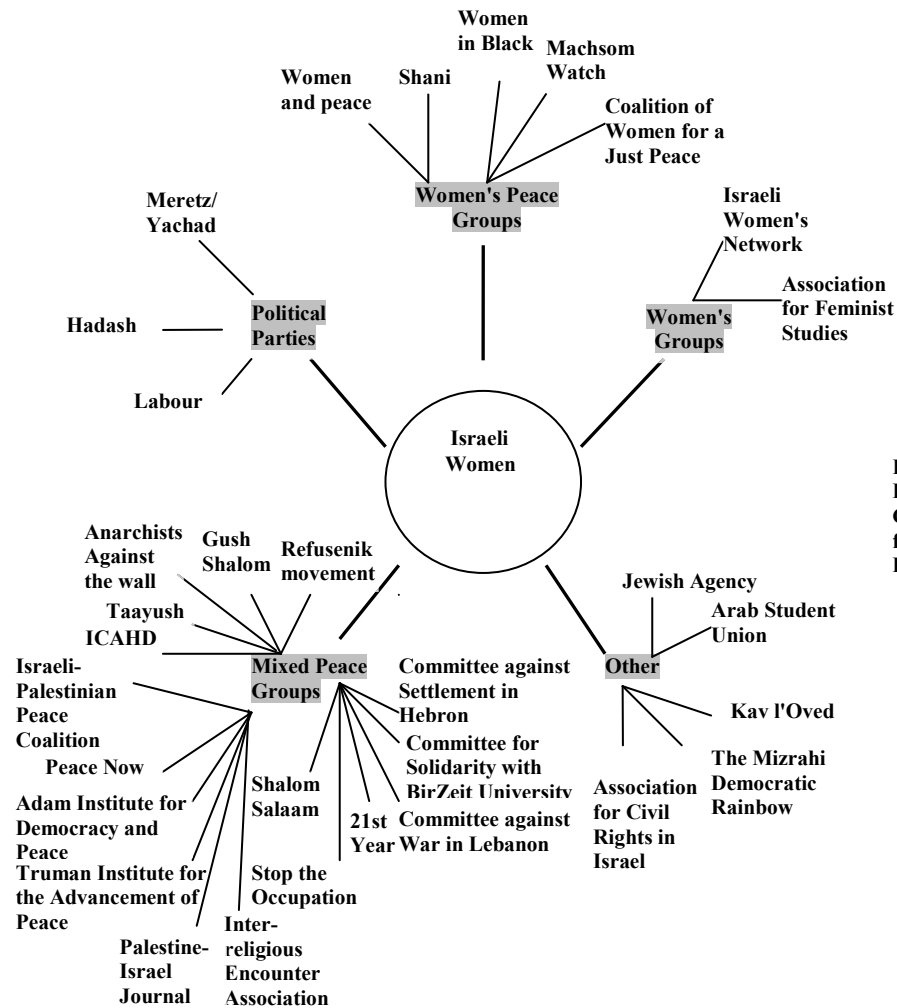
Bat Shalom



Supporters

Source: I11;P7; Bat Shalom Organigramme.

Attachment 6: Other Organizations and Political Connections



Attachment 7: The Jerusalem Link Declaration 1999

Jerusalem Link Declaration

We, Palestinian and Israeli women, united in a joint effort to bring about a just, comprehensive and lasting peace between our two peoples, affirm our commitment to working together within the framework of The Jerusalem Link for the rapid realization of our common vision of peace. This effort is based on the following principles:

1. Recognition of the right to self-determination of both peoples in the land, through the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel on the June 4th, 1967 boundaries.
2. The whole city of Jerusalem constitutes two capitals for two states.
3. The Oslo Declaration of Principles, signed on September 13, 1993, and all subsequent agreements must be implemented immediately and in their entirety.
4. Permanent settlement negotiations must resume without any delays on the basis of the agreed agenda of the Declaration of Principles, the terms of reference being all relevant UN resolutions, including 242 and 338.
5. It is our conviction that all Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 are illegal, as stipulated in international law, and violate the requirements of peace.
6. A just solution to the Palestinian refugee question is an essential requirement for a stable and durable peace. This solution must honor the right of return of the Palestinian refugees in accordance with UN resolution 194.
7. Respect for international conventions, charters and laws and the active involvement of the international community in the peace process are crucial to its success.
8. The realization of political peace will pave the way for mutual understanding and trust, genuine security, and constructive Cupertino on the basis of equality and respect for the national and human rights of both peoples.
9. Women must be central partners in the peace process. Their active and equal participation in decision making and negotiations is crucial to the fulfillment of a just and viable peace.
10. We women are committed to a peaceful solution of our conflict, also as a means for the promotion of democratic and non-violent norms and for the enhancement of civil society.
11. A peaceful solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territory, including Lebanon and Syria, are prerequisites for a just and comprehensive peace. This will pave the way for a region characterized by good neighborly relations and regional Cupertino.

We call on women and men in the region and elsewhere to join in making our vision of peace a reality.

Jerusalem, August, 18th, 1999

Jerusalem Center for Women & Bat Shalom

Source: JCW 2008.

Attachment 8: The Jerusalem Link Declaration 2001

The Jerusalem Link Declaration

We, Palestinian and Israeli women, united in a joint effort to bring about a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace between our two peoples, affirm our commitment to working together, within the framework of The Jerusalem Link, for the rapid realization of our common vision of peace. This effort is based on the following principles.

1. Recognition of the right to self-determination of both peoples in the land, through the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel on the June 4, 1967 boundaries.
2. The whole city of Jerusalem constitutes two capitals for two states.
3. The Oslo Declaration of Principles, signed on September 13, 1993, and all subsequent agreements must be implemented immediately and in their entirety.
4. The permanent settlement negotiations must resume without any delays on the basis of the agreed agenda of the Declaration of Principles, the terms of reference being all relevant UN Resolutions, including 242 and 338.
5. It is our conviction that all Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 are illegal, as stipulated by international law, and violate the requirements for peace.
6. Palestinian: Israel accepts its moral, legal, political and economic responsibility for the plight of Palestinian refugees and thus must accept the right of return according to relevant UN resolutions.
- Israeli: Israel's recognition of its responsibility in the creation of the Palestinian refugees in 1948 is a pre-requisite to finding a just and lasting resolution of the refugee problem in accordance with relevant UN resolutions.
7. Respect for international conventions, charters and laws and the active involvement of the international community in the peace process are crucial to its success.
8. The realization of political peace will pave the way for mutual understanding and trust, genuine security, and constructive cooperation on the basis of equality and respect for the national and human rights of both peoples.
9. Women must be central partners in the peace process. Their active and equal participation in decision making and negotiations is crucial to the fulfilment of a just and viable peace.
10. We women are committed to a peaceful solution of our conflict, also as a means for the promotion of democratic and non-violent norms and the enhancement of civil society.
11. A peaceful solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territory, including Lebanon and Syria, are prerequisites for a just and comprehensive peace. This will pave the way for a Middle East characterized by good neighborly relations and regional cooperation.

We call on women and men in the region and elsewhere to join in making our vision of peace a reality.

Updated: January, 2001

Source: BS 2008.